

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

JAN 28 2004

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 - Main Street
Other name/site number _____

2. Location

Street & number Both sides of Main Street from 24th Street to 26th Street AND 24th Street from 2404 Avenue F to 319 24th street including all properties on the south side of 24th Street and the Wilson Grade School on the north side AND 408 & 417 25th Street AND 418 & 414 26th Street. ☐ not for publication
City or town Wilson ☐ vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Ellsworth Code 053 Zip code 67490

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard D. Parkhurst DSHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title
Kansas State Historical Society

12/15/03
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ entered in the National Register. _____
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register _____
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register _____
☐ removed from the National Register _____
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 - Main Street

Name of property

Ellsworth County, Kansas

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
27 28	8 7	buildings
1		sites
1	3	structures
		objects
28 30	11 10	total

updated
8/17/2010

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling, multiple dwelling, and hotel

COMMERCE: business, professional, financial institution,
specialty store, department store, and restaurant

SOCIAL: meeting hall

GOVERNMENT: city hall, correctional facility, and post office

EDUCATION: school and library

RELIGION: religious facility

RECREATION: theater, auditorium and music facility

INDUSTRY: water works, energy facility, and communications
facility

HEALTH CARE: medical business/office

LANDSCAPE: city park

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling, multiple dwelling, secondary
structure and hotel

COMMERCE: business, professional, financial institution,
specialty store, and restaurant

SOCIAL: meeting hall

GOVERNMENT: city hall and post office

EDUCATION: library

RELIGION: religious facility

INDUSTRY: communications facility

HEALTH CARE: medical business/office

LANDSCAPE: park

WORK IN PROGRESS

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS: No subcategory and Commercial Style

LATE VICTORIAN: No subcategory; Italianate;
and Romanesque

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: No subcategory
and Late Gothic Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT: No subcategory; and Moderne

OTHER

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation LESTONE, CONCRETE

walls LESTONE, BRICK, WOOD, METAL

roof METAL, ASPHALT, SYNTHETIC

other LESTONE, BRICK, METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Downtown Wilson Historic District #1 – Main Street
Name of Property

Ellsworth County, Kansas
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1880-1904

1905-1953

Significant Dates

1880, 1904

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architects: Henry Winter of Manhattan, Smith & English of Hutchinson and local artist, George Eschbaugh; Contractors: J.T. Dalton & Sons of Junction City; F.L. Henderson of Larned, C.M. Lingo, and Fred Karban & Sons (Emery) of Wilson

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ Previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Wilson Czech Opera House Museum

Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street
Name of Property

Ellsworth County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 9 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	4	5	4	5	7	4	2	4	2	9	7	8	0	2	3	1	4	5	4	5	8	4	2	4	2	9	7	7	4	2
	Zone		Easting						Northing							Zone		Easting						Northing							
2	1	4	5	4	5	7	4	2	4	2	9	7	7	4	5	4	1	4	5	4	5	8	4	2	4	2	9	7	7	0	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing							Zone		Easting						Northing							

☒ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Brenda R. Spencer

Organization Preservation Consultant

Date 11 June, 2003

Street & number 10150 Onaga Road

Telephone 785-456-9857

City or town Wamego

State Kansas

Zip code 66547

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name See Continuation Sheet

street & number

telephone

city or town

state

zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16) U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street
Ellsworth County, Kansas

Section Number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

Location, Setting, and Configuration

The Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street is located in the City of Wilson, Ellsworth County, Kansas. Wilson is a rural community of approximately 800 in population situated about one and a half miles north of the Smoky Hill River in central Kansas. The community is located between Salina and Russell, just off of Interstate 70 in the northwest corner of Ellsworth County.

The City of Wilson is bisected by the Union Pacific Railroad (running southeast /northwest). The town proper is situated on the west half of the northeast quarter of Section 19, Township 14, Range 10. The city limits are generally bounded by 21st Street on the north and 31st Street on the south; it extends from Avenue B on the east to Avenue J on the west, north of the tracks, from Avenue D on the east, and Avenue H on the west, south of the tracks. The district is part of Wilson's central business district, the sole concentration of commercial businesses in the City which is primarily located along Main Street (formerly known as Michigan Avenue and Avenue E) and Old U.S. Highway 40 (aka 27th Street and formerly known as Front Street). The central business district too, is bisected by the railroad tracks separating the commercial area into two parts north and south of the tracks. The railroad tracks create a physical separation within the commercial area that is emphasized by the fact that the railroad right-of-way extends a full city block parallel to the tracks. There are numerous structures located on the railroad right-of way in the block west of Main Street, comprised primarily of grain elevators. The right-of-way on the east side of Main Street is the former location of the depot (demolished in the 1980s); the land is now vacant. The grain elevators and vacant land that comprise the railroad right-of-way present a sharp contrast to the commercial structures located on Main Street, north of the tracks and along Highway 40, south of the tracks. The railroad tracks and right-of-way is a dominant geographic feature that serves to define three distinct parts of the commercial area in downtown Wilson. The historic districts follow this same definition.

Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street is approximately four blocks (nine acres) in area. It is bordered on the south by 26th Street (the north edge of the railroad property) and extends two blocks north, along Main Street, to 24th Street. 24th Street is the northern boundary of the district with the exception of The Wilson Grade School, located on the north side of 24th Street at the north end of Main Street. Along Main Street, the district generally spans between the alleys on the east and west sides of Main Street with two exceptions. On the south end of the district (26th Street), the boundaries extend beyond the east alley to include a commercial building and the Midland Hotel at 418 and 414 26th Street. On the north end of the district (24th Street), the boundaries extend a full block in each direction, from the United Methodist Church on the west side of Avenue F to the First Presbyterian Church on the east side of Avenue D. The district is surrounded by residential neighborhoods on the north and east; bordered by municipal and service facilities in contemporary buildings on the west (police, fire, water works, senior center, etc.) and grain elevators and the railroad on the south.

The Union Pacific Railroad bisects the City of Wilson (and the central business district), running southeast to northwest. The city is platted on a basic grid pattern, however, the grid follows the railroad in the south half of the city and jogs to a true N/S/E/W grid at 24th Street on the north and Avenue D on the east. This "correction" on the grid creates varying sized and shaped blocks in the central business district. Disregarding the concentration of buildings, Avenue D (formerly Kansas Street) appears to be the major north/south street and indeed was designed to be the town's original 'main street.' However, early businessmen found the price of lots on this 100' wide street to be too high and instead selected lots on Michigan Avenue one block to the west, to build the town's early commercial structures. And thus, Michigan Avenue became Wilson's Main Street and was later renamed such. The streets in downtown Wilson were renamed; the historic and current names are noted on the attached maps. Current names are used throughout except when using historic references.

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Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street
Ellsworth County, Kansas

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Main Street is a 60' wide street with parallel on-street parking. The street was first paved in 1937. The 2500 block of Main Street is approximately twice the size of the 2400 block and is bisected by a 20' wide east/west alley at mid-block. Lot numbers run parallel to Main Street and therefore, few property lines adhere to lot lines in the legal descriptions. The commercial buildings occupy rectangular lots that are generally in 25' increments in width. The layout of the district does follow that of traditional historic commercial areas. The front facades of the commercial buildings maintain a common setback, abutting a public sidewalk and the buildings typically occupy the full width of the lots, sharing party walls with adjacent buildings. Gravel alleys are generally located mid-block on the east and west sides of Main Street, and bisect the 2500 block of Main north to south. With only two small vacant lots on Main Street, the district generally maintains its historic density. The only exception on Main Street is the new Wilson State Bank building on the corner of 26th and Main - this building is setback from the sidewalk and includes access to a parking area and drive-thru teller off of Main Street.

The district's setting and configuration of buildings reflect its late nineteenth and early twentieth century development. The district includes thirty properties (based on legal descriptions). Twenty-four (80%) are contributing properties; they include: twenty-two contributing buildings, one contributing structure and one contributing site. There are six non-contributing buildings. The total count of resources in the district is forty one, counting park structures, multiple buildings within one property (legal description), and garages. Of the forty one total resources, one building has previously been individually listed on the National Register and there are twenty-seven contributing buildings, one contributing site and one contributing structure for a total of thirty (73%) contributing resources.

Historic Associations

The district was historically comprised of a variety of uses ranging from retail stores and professional offices to institutional facilities including churches, a school, library and city hall. Housing also constituted a prominent use in the district historically, including single dwellings, apartments above businesses, and the hotel. The composition of the district today is representative of its historic functions. Eighteen of the thirty contributing properties are commercial properties. In addition to its traditional commercial functions, the district retains its historic diversity of uses including single and multiple dwellings, churches as well as civic facilities including city hall, library, the post office and a public park.

Physical Description

The contributing properties include buildings, a structure (water tower) and a park constructed between 1880 and 1953. Of these properties, fourteen (including the individually listed property) or 47% were constructed between 1880 and 1904; the remaining sixteen were constructed between 1905 and 1953 (including the only contributing site – the city park, which was developed in the mid-1940s). There are eleven non-contributing properties. Only three of these properties are non-contributing due to loss of integrity. The eight remaining non-contributing structures were constructed after 1950, including the two picnic shelters, flag pole/memorial, and public restroom building in the city park.

Buildings in the district have two predominant building materials, native limestone and brick. The majority of buildings constructed in downtown Wilson between 1880 and 1904 were built of 'greenhorn' limestone, quarried from one of many local quarries. Although there are some exceptions, these buildings were generally two stories in height and represented the first permanent commercial buildings constructed in the community. Decorative elements on these limestone buildings included cut or tooled stone, pressed metal (and some wood) cornices, pressed metal window hoods and some cast iron columns on storefronts. After 1905, the dominant building material was brick (although some buildings were constructed of stone or block and had a brick facade). There were two phases to the period of construction that extends from 1905 to 1953. The first twenty years saw little construction activity; only five buildings were constructed during this period. The First Presbyterian Church, the Wilson Grade School, the old post office building and the Lang Memorial Library were four prominent buildings constructed during this time. These brick buildings broke the former tradition of using native stone as the dominant construction material and represent the transition to one-story commercial buildings. The last two-story building constructed in downtown Wilson was Peppy Jo's barber shop, a two-story brick building on 26th Street, constructed at the late date of 1928. The second phase of this period extended from the mid-1920s until 1953 in which most construction was one-story brick buildings. Throughout this period, ornamental features on the brick buildings

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Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street
Ellsworth County, Kansas

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including limestone detailing, corbelled brick cornices, and later, some variation in brick color and patterns created by using two colors of brick. With few exceptions, the date of construction before or after 1904, determined the dominant building material (limestone or brick) and the date of construction before or after the mid-1920s determined the height (1 story or 2-story) of the buildings in downtown Wilson.

Architectural Type and Style

The majority of contributing structures in the district are commercial building designs with subtle stylistic references, typical of small, rural Kansas downtowns. Additionally, there are five 'set piece' contributing structures that have a dominant presence in the district. These structures include the two churches, the Midland Hotel, the library, and the Grade School. The individual 'set-piece' resources represent a variety of stylistic influences, determined primarily by their date of construction. The earliest of these structures is the Methodist Church, constructed in 1888 and expanded in 1893. The addition is heavily influenced by the Gothic Revival style, dictating the building's classification under the Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals. Constructed in 1899, the Midland Hotel is also a Late Victorian structure, with stylistic influences including Second Empire, Queen Anne, Italianate and Romanesque. The Presbyterian Church, constructed in 1910 was the first documented brick structure in downtown Wilson and was heavily influenced by the Romanesque style and thus also classified as a Late Victorian structure. The Grade School is perhaps the most prominent downtown structure, at the 'head' of Main Street. Constructed in 1916, it is difficult to classify stylistically. It is representative of educational architecture of the period and incorporates stone detailing characteristic of Prairie School influences. As such, it is classified within the Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements. Finally, the public library, constructed in 1923 is also classified under Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals given its Beaux Arts influences including the building's formal symmetry and use of pilasters and the arched Palladian windows characteristic of the Italian Renaissance style. These prominent buildings contribute significantly to the district's architectural character and may have influenced detailing of the traditional commercial properties in downtown Wilson.

Stylistically, the commercial structures fall into three classifications. Seven properties, or approximately one-third of the district's contributing commercial structures, are examples of high style architecture and fall under the Late Victorian classification. The majorities of these structures are Italianate style and feature elements characteristic of the style including pressed metal cornices, often with paired brackets, arched window openings and/or decorative lintels, as well as some cast iron storefront columns. The dominate style among the district's commercial structures are thirteen buildings that are characteristic of the Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movement Commercial Style. This classification includes both one and two story buildings constructed of both limestone and brick. The buildings are unified by their general lack of ornamentation, typically limited to subtle brick and/or stone detailing. The final stylistic classification for commercial properties in the district is the Modern Movement. The second period of significance for the district spans to 1953. The last three extant contributing buildings in the district were constructed between 1950 and 1953 and all are representative of the Modern style. These three buildings differ slightly from the traditional commercial storefront configurations as a reflection of their original functions.

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Ellsworth County, Kansas

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Property Listing

Identification of building names and numbers, date of construction and contributing/non-contributing

#	Name	Address	1880- 1904	1905- 1953	1954- 1964	Contributing
1	Wilson Grade School	420 24th Street		1916		C
2	United Methodist Church	2404 Avenue F	1888			C
3	Lang Memorial Library	2405 Avenue F		1923		C
4	Czech Cottages	518-20 25th Street			2003	NC
5	U.S. Post Office	2404 Main Street			1964	NC
6	Olds Motor Company	2418 Main Street	1885			C
				1921		C
7	Robinson Residence	2405 Main Street	1895			C
	Robinson Garage		1895			C
8	City Hall	2407 Main Street	1903			C
9	Somer Hardware Building	2411 Main Street	1890			C
10	Mortuary Building	2415 Main Street	1890			NC
11	Nesmith Grocery Building	2419 Main Street	1880			C
	Himes Hardware Building	and 418 25th Street	1880			C
12	Telephone Co. Building	408 25th Street		1950		C
13	City (Lions Club) Park	24th Street & Avenue D		1945		C
	picnic shelters - 2				1957-59	NC
	Restroom building				1957-59	NC
	Flag pole/memorial				1957-59	NC
14	First Presbyterian Church	319 24th Street		1910		C
	Schermerhorn & Lang Building					C
15	Bank of Wilson Building	2504 Main Street	1893			C
16	Bank of Wilson Building	2508 Main Street	1882			C
17	IOOF/Latta Drug Building	2512-14 Main Street	1884			C
18	Post Office (Tobias Building)	2520-28 Main Street		1917		C
19	Tobias Water Tower/Old Jail	behind 2528 Main St.		1907		C
20	Valetor Cleaners Building	2530 Main Street		1953		C
21	Klema IGA Building	2526-46 Main Street		1932		C
				1932		C
		and 508 26th Street		1946		C
				1950		C
		2505 (2503-1/2) Main St.				C
22	Wilson State Bank Building		1886			C
23	Horejsi Building	2509 Main Street		1924		NC
24	Novak Building	2515 Main Street		1929		C
25	Sula Meat Market Building	2519 Main Street	1890			C
26	A.F. Cross Building	2523 Main Street		1925		C
27	Levitt Dept. Store Building	417 25th Street	1886			NC
28	Wilson State Bank	422 26th Street	1985			NC
29	Vocosek Barber Shop	418 26th Street		1928		C
	Garage				1970s	NC
30	Midland Hotel	414 26th Street	1889			C

NC/C updated
2/17/2010

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Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street
Ellsworth County, Kansas

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ELABORATION

Properties

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Wilson Grade School
420 24 th Street
Lots 1-3 & 10-12 & West ½ N/S vac alley and all E/W vac alley in Tyler's Addition | Contributing |
|---|---------------------|

Date of Construction: 1916

Current Function: WORK IN PROGRESS

Architectural Classification: LATE 10th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

Documentation: Figures #1-2; Photos #1-2

Description: The school is a 2-1/2 story red brick structure with a full basement, generally rectangular in plan form. The building has a flat roof with a simple brick parapet and a stone cap. The parapet steps up to form a shallow pediment at the center of the front facade. The roof is tapered to direct runoff to scuppers at the center of the east and west sides. There is a large brick chimney near the center of the east side. The front (south) facade is symmetrical with three bays; twin primary entrances flank the center bay which projects slightly from the building facade. The original doors were a set of three-panel wood doors with a five panel transom, leading to an entry vestibule one-half story above grade. Stairways are located inside the two main entrances. The facades are simple in design with subtle ornamentation through smooth stone bands, panels and window sills. Brick stretcher courses at the water table, between the basement and 1st floors, and around some door and window openings, also provide subtle distinction on the facade. The original windows were generally 1/1 wood double hung windows. Horizontal bands of five windows on the front and sides of the building, had fixed transoms; rear auditorium windows were tripartite windows with double hung windows flanking a center fixed pane with individual transoms. The majority of windows have been previously replaced with aluminum windows but the original double hung wood windows are in place at some basement openings. The site has perimeter sidewalks and a paved basketball court on the east side. Playground equipment is in place on the north half of the site. The school was remodeled in 1967 when a gymnasium was constructed at the high school; at that time, the auditorium and gymnasium were converted to classrooms.

History: The school was built by the Board of Education in 1916; Chas. Whitmer was President, G.L. Levitt, Treasurer, and C.L. Danner, Secretary of the School Board. The site of the school was originally the home of A. A. Jellison who came to Wilson in 1873 and was a prominent early businessman selling lumber, hardware, furniture, dry goods and groceries. Jellison built the first grain elevator and was a leader in the building of the First Presbyterian Church in 1880. The Jellisons, active in the parent/teacher organization, contributed funds to establish a library in the new school. The school opened in March of 1917 and was considered "an epoch in the development of the town." According to an article in *The Wilson World* (March 1, 1917), "Its central location, its provision for athletics, its library and auditorium make it something more than a mere ward school. It is a building that makes an imposing appearance standing as it does fronting down Main Street." The new school was originally used "for the grades and the high school will continue at the old building." The school originally housed the sixth grade down, however, the lower grades were divided with pupils living south of the tracks, continuing to attend the south school" (March 15, 1917 *The Wilson World*). The article announcing the opening of the school (March 1, 1917 *The Wilson World*) noted that, "It will become in reality a community building where the civic interests of the town will center...Basketball games and other athletic contests will be given in the gymnasium and thus will serve a public need. When this (the library) is opened, there will be more people visit the building in a month than ever visited the south school during its existence. The auditorium is provided with opera chairs and will probably seat more people than any building in town; the auditorium features a stage. The article boasts electric lights and modern conveniences." The school was indeed used as a community facility as evidenced by a 1934 photo of the community 'Oratorio' performed in the school auditorium on Easter Sunday. The school, from early times, was referred to as Longfellow School, although the reason for the name is unclear. The school served the community for nearly eighty years; it closed in 1998 due to school consolidation. Shortly thereafter the high school, south of town was

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Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street
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demolished. This school is the only extant school structure in the community. The Wilson Community Foundation purchased the building and plans to convert it to an Assisted Living Center are underway.

Henri Winter designed two buildings in Wilson in 1916, the Wilson Grade School and a commercial building for J.F. Tobias, to house the post office (1917). J.T. Dalton and Sons of Junction City was the contractor on the Grade School. Henry B. Winter (born in Germany in 1883), of Manhattan, Kansas was a well known, competent, regional architect. He graduated in architecture from Kansas State Agricultural College in 1908. His father (John) was a successful building contractor in Manhattan. Winter designed numerous buildings in Manhattan and throughout Kansas, including churches, schools, commercial buildings and private residences and apartment buildings. An extensive history on Henry Winter - "Henry B. Winter, An Early 20th Century Kansas Architect," by Patricia J. O'Brien, is provided in Appendix 1 of the Lyda Jean Apartments (Manhattan, Kansas) National Register Nomination.

Integrity: The distinctive architectural elements of this building have been maintained. The replacement doors and windows retain the size and configuration of original masonry openings. The exterior reflects the building's original appearance and retains a high degree of architectural integrity. The school is prominently located at the north end of Main Street and is a contributing property to the district.

2. **United Methodist Church**
2404 Avenue F
Lots 1-3, Block 3, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Contributing

Date of Construction: 1888

Current Function: RELIGION: religious facility

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Late Gothic Revival

Documentation: Figure #3; Photos #3, 5

Description: The original structure, built in 1888, was a simple rectangular structure with a gable roof, constructed of coursed, rock-faced, native stone. A small projection in the center of the north wall is capped by a gable roof intersecting with the main roof. The narrow rectangular window openings have natural faced stone flat lintels and sills. The only ornamentation was a round, recessed stone panel with a date stone and decorative, cut barge boards in the gable ends. A 1893 addition in the Gothic Revival style, dominates the simple form of the original structure. The expansion converted the plan into an 'L' shape with an intersecting gable roof. A modest tower was added at the intersection of the old and new, in the 'L'. The addition is constructed of the same native stone, but is distinguished from the original structure by the Gothic arched windows, with smooth stone arched lintels. The tower serves at the entrance and is topped by a roof that is split with an open frame at the bell. The upper and lower tower roofs have flared eaves, the lower has gable cut outs, that project slightly. The building has undergone some alteration over the years. The front door is an obvious replacement, a lighted sign has been erected in front of the church and a handicap ramp built at the west entrance.

The Excelsior Methodist Church, originally located on the Wilson Flats east of town, was moved to a location west of the church in the fall of 1927 to serve as the Wilson Methodist church's parish house. Later, in 1954 - a brick structure, was constructed on a lot west of the church, approximately one block away. The 1927 parish, may have been removed at that time; it is not in place today. In the late 1950s, a building fund was started for a new educational building. Harry Eirlich was awarded the contract and work began in 1963. The brick building west of the church (the Fellowship Hall) includes a kitchen, restrooms, and four Sunday School rooms.

History: Built of native stone, the Wilson United Methodist Church is one of the earliest and continually operating churches in the community. The current building was constructed in 1888 at a cost of \$4,450. This building replaced the first church building at the same location which was built in 1885 at a cost of \$3,000 and destroyed by fire in 1888. On

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January 6, 1889 the first services were held in the new building, an annex was added in 1893 bringing the church building to its current form. The Wilson United Methodist Church, which observed its centennial in 1979, was permanently organized on February 19, 1879. Charter members included: Mr. & Mrs. W.L. Nesmith, Mr. & Mrs., N. Hood, Mr. & Mrs. W.H. Carhart, Mrs. M.M. Stolz and Jeannie Stolz. As early as November of 1873, a local preacher by the name of John Conner held services. In May of 1874, a temporary organization was made, composed mostly of Methodists and Presbyterians. The building was built in 1888 and has continually served the Methodists, for 114 years.

Integrity: The building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and is representative of the wide use of native stone in the construction of early structures. Located one block off Main Street and continuing in its original function, The Methodist Church is a significant and contributing property to the district.

3. **Lang Memorial Library**
 2405 Avenue F
 North ½ of Lots 17-22, Block 5, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Contributing

Date of Construction: 1923

Current Function: EDUCATION: library

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS

Documentation: Figure #4; Photos #4-5

Description: This one story, red brick building, is generally rectangular in form and has a coursed, ashlar stone foundation. The roof is flat with a crenulated brick parapet with simple stone cap. The facades have two smooth stone horizontal bands beneath the parapet and a stone panel inscribed with "Lang Memorial Library" is located between the two bands in the center of the front facade. Brick pilasters with stone caps define the corners of the building and paired pilasters frame the central entrance on the front (west) facade. The front facade is comprised of three bays; the main entrance is a large round-arched opening with a stone surround, flanked by small arched slit windows with integral arched brick lintels and stone sills located between the two pilasters. The end bays have a large Palladian window with a stone surround. The north and south side facades have three pairs of double hung windows and the rear facade has three single, double-hung windows. The rectangular plan form is broken at the rear where the center bay projects approximately six feet. Although difficult to categorize stylistically, the building portrays Beaux Arts influences with the formal, symmetrical facade and pilasters; the Palladian windows are characteristic of the Italian Renaissance influence. In the 1970s, the original basement windows on the sides of the building were infilled. The main entrance was originally accessed by concrete steps. In the past fifteen years, the steps were modified, the landing expanded and a ramp installed to make the building accessible. Storm windows have also been installed.

History: The building was built as the City's first public library in 1923 and continues to serve that function today. The first organized city library was formed through the Parent Teachers organization (made possible by a contribution from A.A. Jellison) and located in the grade school, built in 1916. On April 26, 1923, it was announced in *The Wilson World* that "One of the old settlers and friends of the town has offered to make a gift of \$10,000 to the city for the purpose of building and funding a public library if the city will agree to maintain it." Mrs. J.T. (Lizzie) Lang donated the funds as a memorial to her husband, (John) one of the pioneer businessmen of the town and the first mayor (when the town was incorporated in 1873). Mrs. Joseph Tobias, A.D. Jellison, and Mrs. S. Anspaugh donated the ground upon which the library was built; the site was located across from the Methodist Church. The building was designed by Smith & English Architects of Hutchinson; F.L. Henderson of Larned was the contractor. Named the Lang Memorial Library, the new facility was opened to the public in August of 1924. Miss Lucille McCoy was the librarian and the building was open daily from 3-6pm and 7-9pm on Monday, Wednesdays, and Saturdays.

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J.A. Lang (born 1840) came to Wilson from Cape Girardeau Missouri in 1881. He bought out Thompson in the firm of Schermerhorn & Thompson Dry Goods and built the existing Schermerhorn & Lang building in 1893; he continued in business with Schermerhorn until 1923 - one of the most prominent businesses in town. Mr. Lang died in 1923 and his wife donated the money for the library in his memory.

Integrity: With only minor exterior alterations, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity. Located one block off of Main Street and retaining its historic function, the Library is a significant and contributing property to the district.

4. **Czech Cottages**
518-520 25th Street
Lots 4-6, Block 2, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Non-Contributing

Date of Construction: 2003
Current Function: DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling
Architectural Classification: OTHER: contemporary construction
Documentation: Photo #5

Description: The structure is new straw bale construction with a stucco finish. It is generally rectangular in form with a low gable roof that extends to form car ports on the east and west sides.

History: Recently completed, the new structure is a duplex and will be leased as subsidized housing.

Integrity: The structure is new construction, built well after the period of significance. The style and function is not consistent with the historic character of the downtown area. For these reasons, it is a non-contributing property to the district.

5. **United States Post Office**
2404 Main Street
Begin NE Corner Lot 2, Block 2, Then South 96.9', Westerly 127', Northerly 71', Easterly 102' to point of beginning, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Non-Contributing

Date of Construction: 1964
Current Function: GOVERNMENT: post office
Architectural Classification: MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne
Documentation: Photo #6

Description: The building is a one story blond brick structure, with aluminum windows accented by turquoise metal panels, typical of 1960s civic buildings.

History: This site was historically occupied by the Golden Belt Garage with two single family residences to the south. The land was sold by Frank C. Klema to Richard Proffitt in 1963; Proffitt leased the property to US Postal Service in 1964 for construction of Post Office. The building continues to serve that function today.

Integrity: This building is a good example of its type and period of construction. It retains a high degree of integrity, however, it does not contribute to the district due to its construction (1964) after the period of significance.

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6. **Olds Motor Company** **Contributing**
2418 Main Street
Begin SE Corner Lot 2, Block 2, Then North 75', Southeasterly 77.08', South 79', Northwesterly 100' to Point of
Beginning, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1888; 1921 addition

Current Function: VACANT/NOT-IN USE

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate [2-story 1885 building]

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style [1-story 1921 building]

Documentation: Figures #5-7; Photos #1, 7

Description: Olds Motor Company is comprised of two buildings. The first, constructed in 1885 is a two-story corner building that is a two part commercial block structure constructed of native limestone. The building has a traditional storefront with large display windows, brick bulkhead, central entrance and prism glass transom. In old photos, there are canvas awnings in place over the transom on the front facade. The storefront wraps around the south side of the building. The ground floor level is above grade, accessed by two steps at the front entrance. The upper floor has regularly spaced double hung windows with decorative hoods (hoods are removed on the south facade). There is an ornamental cornice with brackets on the front facade. The second building, constructed in 1921 is an enframed window wall, one story building with a brick facade and stepped parapet. The parapet is divided into three bays that do not align with the lower facade. Brick pilasters on the upper facade frame an inset panel that has been stuccoed on each of the bays. The lower facade is asymmetrical with the entrance on the south end and two display windows flanking a central garage door opening. Transoms were present over each of the lower storefront components. The storefront has been altered; the door, garage door and display windows are contemporary replacements and a large sign extends the entire length of the building over the transom area. Around the time that the second building was constructed, a canopy, supported by square brick pillars, was added to the two-story building to serve as a gas station bay. This canopy retains its original form but has a stucco coating. There are secondary structures at the rear of these buildings. A one-story shed addition spans both buildings; it is in poor condition and currently being removed. There is also a small portable shed with a lean-to, used for storage.

History: The lot on which the two-story stone building stands was purchased by Ella W. Russell in 1883. Appraisal records date construction at 1885. In 1886, a notice in *The Wilson Echo* stated that J.H. Thompson was moving his dry goods store to the Russell Building, north of Schermerhorn and Lang [Thompson opened Schermerhorn and Thompson in 1879 and sold out to Lang in 1881 and opened his own dry goods business across from Windmill corner]. Advertisements in the 1890s advertised O.B. Goffe, dealer in hardware, tin ware, cook stoves, ranges, etc. in the Russell Building. Russell sold the building to Dora Messick in 1897 who in turn sold it to J.W. Briggs in 1898. [J.W. Briggs came to Wilson originally in 1872, was appointed Postmaster for Wilson in 1879, and established a Notion, stationery and confectionary store, out of which he operated the post office. Briggs store and post office was originally located a block south on Michigan Avenue (Main Street) where the grocery store is now located. It is possible that Briggs moved his shop to the Russell Building when he purchased it in 1898; Briggs' business continued to be advertised in the local paper and phone book during this time, but the location is not specified.] In 1906 Briggs sold the building to W.H. Berger. In May of 1885, the Berger Bros grocery first advertised in *The Wilson Echo* after Berger Bros. bought out B.F. Himes Grocery on North Street; Berger built a new store building on North Street in 1886 (demolished). They apparently moved to the Michigan Avenue (Main Street) location after purchasing the building from Briggs in 1906. In 1920 William Berger sold the building to Frank D. Olds.

F.D. Olds was working as a general handyman in Junction City when he was approached by Jellison (A.A. Jellison was founder of the Wilson State Bank, his brother was a banker in Junction City) to purchase an automobile garage in Wilson. In 1915 F.D. moved to Wilson and began operating the Golden Belt Garage on the corner where the post office is today. In 1920, F.D. sold the corner building and purchased the former Berger Grocery building. The Olds family lived on the

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second floor, above the store. At that time there were two single-family dwellings on the site, north of the two-story commercial building. In 1921 F.D. Olds built an addition to the north for a new car showroom. He bought lumber from Fort Riley where the WWI barracks at Camp Funston were being dismantled, and had it hauled to Wilson by train. In addition to the one story brick addition, they also built the rear shop spanning the two buildings, and the service bay on the two-story building. A 1922 advertisement for Olds Motor advertised White Eagle Station. They sold gas (at the service bay on the two-story building) through the mid-1930s. Over the years, Old's Motor sold Willys-Knight, Maxwell, Hudson, DeSoto, Chrysler and Plymouth automobiles. F.D.'s two sons, Francis and Pernal, returned to Wilson after the war and took an active role in the business. F.D. died in 1952 and Francis took over the new car sales. He and his brother were in partnership until 1965 when Francis bought out his brother's interest, providing an opening for Francis's son Alan. Old's Motor Company was in continuous operation from 1920 until recently. The building had recently been sold and is currently not in use.

Integrity: This property is representative of both the first period of major construction in the 1880s primarily of native stone buildings, and the second period of construction in the 1920s, primarily of brick structures. The storefront changes represent common alterations. Despite the alterations, the buildings continue to convey their historic commercial associations and otherwise maintain a high degree of architectural integrity. The buildings are prominent commercial structures in downtown Wilson and housed an anchor business (Old's Motor Company) for more than eighty years. It is a contributing property to the district.

7. **Robinson Residence and Garage**
Contributing

2405 Main Street

Begin NW Corner Block 1, Then East 101', Southwesterly 71', Northwesterly 100', Northeasterly 50' to point of beginning In Original Township & Bosland Addition.

Date of Construction: c. 1895

Current Function: DOMESTIC: single dwelling and secondary structure

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Figures #6-8; Photo #8

Description: This property is comprised of two individual one story limestone buildings, both constructed around 1895. The building on the north was constructed as a residence on the ground floor and the newspaper office and printing business in the basement. The front facade is asymmetrical with an entrance on the north end, one single and one pair of double-hung windows. Stairs led from the sidewalk to the entrance, above grade. A stairwell originally led to the basement office from the front sidewalk, the well now has an iron railing. The basement windows are visible at the sidewalk level. The north facade has six single windows, originally double hung. All of the windows have been replaced, most are still double hung windows, but a projecting bay window has been installed in one opening on the north facade. There is a large chimney on the north facade. At the rear of the building, a small shed addition was added, half of which is enclosed, the other half forming a back porch. A gable roof has been installed on this building; however, the original configuration with the flat roof is clearly distinguished.

The building on the south is a one-part commercial block structure, originally with stone piers and a simple metal cornice. The building had a traditional storefront with large display windows flanking a central entrance and tall, vertical paneled transoms. In one old photo, it appears that the building had a metal shed awning supported by wood posts. The existing pair of large paneled doors with glass panes, appear to be those in place in a 1940s photo. The front and rear of the building have been covered with horizontal siding with the exception of the transom and cornice, which are original. An

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overhead garage door has been installed on the rear of the south building and it is used as a garage for the residence on the north. Although the alterations are clearly contemporary, they obscure few significant features.

History: In 1888 a fire started at the rear of M.H. Alderson's Drug Store (Nesmith Mortuary building in mid-block) and spread north, demolishing the Eagle office (an early local paper published from June of 1888 to February of 1889), Barton's tin shop (current location of City Hall), and Dr. Hindman's newly built grocery store (location of Somer Hardware building). This fire obviously predates the existing buildings and no record could be found to substantiate the location of The Eagle office but it was reportedly at the north end of Main Street and possibly on this lot. Although the precise history is unclear, the north building is known as the location of the local newspaper for years (located in the basement with a printing office and the owner/editor residing above). The south building was originally constructed as a "play house" with a stage on the east end where traveling shows performed and Lyceum courses were held.

In 1894, the N50' (these two lots) of Block 2, was sold to S.A. Coover by A.A. Jellison for a cost of \$1600. It is unclear as to whether Coover, who was owner of *The Wilson Echo*, built the buildings. *The Wilson Echo* was the town's first successful newspaper, established by Coover in 1880 [two other newspapers – *The Wilson Index* (Oct. 1878-May 1879) and *The Wilson Eagle* (June 1888-February 1889) were not in existence long]. The original Echo office was located west of the first Latta Drug, just north of the depot on Saline Street. By 1894 Coover owned these lots but no record could be found regarding construction of the buildings. Coover died in the late 1890s and in 1899, C.S. Hutchinson (Coover's step son) took over as editor. In 1905, a tragic incident resulted in the untimely death of Hutchinson when he was shot by the town marshal in a dispute in the newspaper office. It has been reported by locals that this incident took place in the basement of the existing building, supporting the fact Coover and/or Hutchinson built the building(s) after purchasing the land in 1894. In 1903, the south half of the property was sold by Grover and Hutchinson; this fact supports the possibility that the Echo was located on the north lot by this time, built by Coover and/or his step son, Hutchinson. At the time of Hutchinson's death, Dallas Grover took over as editor. The paper was owned by Rolland Patterson who sold it later the same year, to Charles Seaver. Mr. Seaver continued operation of *The Echo* until 1913 when he sold it to W.S. Baxter and the name was changed to *The Wilson World*. Deed records during this period are unclear. By the 1940s, Dale Stinson was the owner of the building and owner/editor of *The Wilson World*. Stinson lived in the residence and continued to publish the paper in the basement. It was Stinson who sold the north building to the current owners in 1954.

As previously stated, the south building was originally constructed as a "play house" and used initially for performances by traveling shows and Lyceum courses and later reportedly used as a theater. By the mid-1920s, John Rezabek owned the south building. It was reportedly used as a "storeroom" for the sale of implements and used cars. In 1925, Rezabek rented the building to Leo Weber who opened Weber Motor Co., selling Essex and Hudson automobiles. By 1939, Weber Motor Co. purchased a building on Highway 40 and moved to that location. In a 1940 photo, the building was occupied by Paul Kejr Repair Shop. Rezabek continued ownership of the building throughout this time. A relative of his, Stanley Mikuleski, had a windmill and repair shop in the building in the late 1940s and 1950s. Following Mikuleski's death, Rezabek sold the building to the current owners, the Robinson's, who had previously purchased the residence to the north. They converted this building to a garage and continue to use it as such today.

Integrity: Although these two buildings are not representative of the traditional two-story commercial buildings built around the turn of the century in downtown Wilson, they are of the same period and significant given their location on Main Street and native stone construction. The buildings are unique in that they are among only a few one story buildings built during in this period, and in that the north structure was originally built as a residence on the ground floor. Although the structures have experienced alterations over the years, most were on secondary facades. The replacement windows on the north building are similar to the original double hung windows on the front facade and although siding obscures the original display windows on the south building, the recessed entrance and transoms remain, maintaining the basic proportions of the storefront. Despite the alterations, the original configuration is evident on both buildings and the buildings retain their historic associations. Although originally built as a play house, the south building has functioned as a garage for eighty years, nearly fifty of which have been as the private garage for the residence to the north. The north

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building is significant as the prominent location of the local newspaper for more than fifty years and given that it retains its historic function as a residence on the ground floor. Both structures are contributing properties to the district.

8. **City Hall** **Contributing**
2407 Main Street
Begin 50' South of NW Corner Block 1 Then Southeasterly 100', Southwesterly 22', Northwesterly 100',
Northeasterly 22' to point of beginning in Original Township & Bosland Addition.

Date of Construction: c. 1903

Current Function: GOVERNMENT: city hall

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Figure #6; Photo #8

Description: City Hall is a one story native stone building with a basement. The original storefront configuration is unknown but in an early 1900s photo, the building had a metal shed awning supported by wood posts. The existing brick facade was installed on the front of the building in 1938 but the original stone structure is evident at the rear of the building. The existing storefront is a simple, traditional design with a recessed central entrance flanked by display windows on each side. The transom is in place, but covered and there is a metal slat awning between the transom and display windows. The ground floor is above grade, accessed by steps from the sidewalk and the basement windows are visible above grade. On the upper facade, there is a smooth stone panel inscribed with "City Hall 1938" and a simple brick cap on the parapet. At the rear, the original native stone is in place and exposed. There is a central entrance into the ground floor, a window on the south end and a small shed addition (3'x3') with a door on the north end.

History: The building is significant as the Wilson City Hall, reportedly serving this function since its construction and continuing today. A.A. Jellison owned numerous lots in Block 1 in the mid to late 1880s. His lumber business was located on the east side of the block, not on Michigan Avenue (Main Street). Jellison sold this lot to E.J. Barton in 1884. A fire (reported in the September, 6, 1888 *Ellsworth Reporter*) destroyed several businesses in this block, including Barton's tin shop. That fire pre-dates the existing building and it is unclear precisely when the existing building was constructed. Deed records indicate that Barton sold the property to the City of Wilson in May of 1903. It is unclear if Barton rebuilt after the fire or if the City built the existing building after purchasing the land in 1903. The City Council first met in Levitt Hall, above R.T. Levitt's Department Store. That two-story stone building on 25th Street, was built in 1886 and specifically designed to include a community hall on the 2nd floor. A date stone on the front of the building is inscribed "City Hall 1886. No record could be found of the move to the current building, or construction of the current building. The current location is reported to be the only location of City Hall during the lifetime of long time Wilson residents and as previously stated, the existing brick facade was installed in 1938. An entry was recorded in the City Council minutes on August 1, 1938, that the UP Garage be the temporary meeting place to transact all City Business during the remodeling of City Hall. The building continues to function as City Hall today.

Integrity: Although the original building was one of the few one-story native stone structures built in downtown Wilson, the existing brick facade is representative of the second period of significance in which numerous one-story brick commercial structures were built. The 1938 brick facade has gained significance in its own right. The building retains its historic function as City Hall and is a contributing property to the district.

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9. **Somer Hardware Building**

Contributing

2411 Main Street

Begin 75' N of SW Corner, Block 1, Then North- easterly 49', Southeasterly 100', Northeasterly 91', E24', Southwesterly 119', Northwesterly 23', Southwesterly 25', Northwesterly 100' to point of beginning in Original Township & Bosland Addition.

Date of Construction: c. 1890

Current Function: VACANT/NOT IN USE

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN

Documentation: Figures #6, 9; Photos #1, 8-9

Description: Built around 1890, this two story building constructed of native stone, is a two part commercial block structure. It is the only existing structure in downtown Wilson with the original corrugated metal awning, supported by wood posts, still in place. The building is unique in a variety of ways. The roof form is a low hip, not visible at street level due to the stone parapet walls. The upper facade was originally covered with stamped metal (extant today) presumably for the purpose of using the upper facade as a sign board – as seen in an early 1900s photo. The building has a simple metal cornice with brackets and regularly spaced double hung windows on the upper facade (front, north, and rear). The window openings have smooth stone sills and shaped lintels. All upper window openings have been covered and it is unclear if the original windows are in place. Like many buildings on Main Street, the ground floor is above grade, accessed by steps from the sidewalk at the entrances. Basement windows were visible at the sidewalk on the front facade and steps originally led down to a set of double doors that provided basement access on the front of the building (original location of a bakery). As evidenced by the early 1900s photo, the original storefront was wood, with three sets of double doors providing entrances to the ground floor, and large display windows with wood paneled bulkheads and transoms. The storefront has been altered with a single central entrance and flush wood panels with large paned display windows. There is no delineation of the former transom. The basement access and windows have been removed. At the rear of the building, the original limestone is exposed on the ground floor, and although windows are covered, the original stone sills and arched lintels are visible.

History: A.A. Jellison owner a number of lots in Block 1 at the time many of the existing buildings were constructed. As early as 1882, Jellison & Hindman had a store on Michigan Avenue (Main Street). By 1886 Hindman had bought out Jellison and apparently built a new grocery store in 1887-88, in this location. That building was destroyed by fire in 1888. Appraisal records date construction of the existing building at 1890. The original occupants of the new (existing) building are not certain but it appears that the building may have been built by S.P. Himes (listed as owner of the building in 1899 on the abstract). In a photo from the early 1900s, a faint sign indicates that the building is occupied by B.F. Himes. B.F. Himes had a grocery store on North Street which he sold to Berger Bros. in 1885. B.F. Himes may have opened another store in this location. S.P. Himes had the Hardware Store two buildings south from 1886 - 1907 but may have also had a business in this location. There is clear record that Somer purchase this building (a hardware store) from S.P. Himes in 1905. The building was home to the city's first commercial bakery; a 1902 advertisement in *The Wilson Echo* advertised the "The only bakery between Kansas City and Denver," owned by J.J. Rice and located in the basement of the Himes block. John J. and Katie Rice (married to Tobin) operated the bakery in the early 1900s (later known as Tobin Bakery). In later years, the bakery was called the Home Bakery and owned by Frank J. Mohesky. The ovens remain in place today. A 1905 notice in the local paper stated that Mrs. Himes had opened a millenary above the Hardware Store; it is unclear whether that was this building or the corner building to the south. The upstairs was once used for apartments.

In 1880, the Somer family emigrated from their native Bohemia to the United States and established residence in Wilson. As a school boy, Anthony F. (Tony) Somer worked for Mr. Vanis in a meat market. Later he worked in Himes Hardware and in 1905; Mr. Somer (with Charles and James Phillips) purchased the store from Himes and operated it as Phillips Bros. & Somer. In 1911 Mr. Somer and his brother-in-law bought the interests of the Phillips Bros. and in 1919 Mr. Somer became sole owner of the business. Tony brought his son Edward into the business who continued to operate it after his

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father's death. Mrs. Ed (Beryle) Somer continued to operate the store until 1973, four years after her husband's death. The business was sold to Roger and Julia Woodmansee in 1973 who continued the hardware business under the name of Wilson Hardware. Following more than seventy years as a hardware store, the building was later owned by Joan Zamrzla, who ran Quilts N Things, and it was then taken over by the Russell State Bank. The building was purchased by Fred and Zona Homier who made improvements and rented the building to Sue and Leroy Whitmer who opened The Workout, a fitness center, in 1984. Later a junk shop, the building was purchased by the Wilson Economic Development Corporation and gifted to the Wilson Opera House Corporation, the current owner. Today, the building is vacant.

Integrity: The former alterations on this building represent common changes in downtown commercial buildings. The upper windows have been blocked-in but the original openings are maintained and visible. The existing storefront maintains traditional components even though it is clearly a contemporary replacement. Despite these modifications, the building continues to convey its historic commercial associations and otherwise maintain a high degree of integrity including the original awning, upper facade and the traditional distinction between the upper and lower facade. This building is significant as one of the early commercial structures in downtown Wilson, home to a prominent local business, Somer Hardware, for nearly seventy years. It is a contributing property to the district.

10. Mortuary Building

Non-Contributing

2415 Main Street

Begin 50'N of SW Corner of Block 1 then Northeasterly 24.49', Southeasterly 100', Southwesterly 23.8',
Northwesterly 27', Southwesterly 1.16', Northwesterly 73' to point of beginning in Original Township & Bosland
Addition

Date of Construction: c. 1885 (1950s-60's facade covering)

Current Function: COMMERCE: restaurant

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Documentation: Figures #6, 10-13; Photos #1, 9

Description: This structure is a two story building constructed of native stone around 1885. It is a typical two part commercial block structure with a flat roof. The building originally had a metal cornice with brackets and three 2/2 double hung windows on the upper facade with metal shaped hoods; the upper windows are still in place on the rear facade. The original storefront is not visible in any of the historic photos discovered to date. The existing front facade covering was installed by Joseph Stiles in the 1950s-60s. The facade covering is a combination of faux stone and vertical wood siding on the upper facade with a horizontal band or grill simulating the appearance of windows. The storefront configuration had been drastically altered with a pair of metal doors in the center and no display or transom windows. Two-tone green structural pigmented glass frames the central doors and the storefront with glass block insets. The result is an ill-proportioned facade with no relationship to the building's original configuration. Although the original storefront was probably removed, the existing slipcover may be reversible. It is unclear if the original upper windows are in place, obscured by the existing covering.

History: Deed records show that the property was sold by W.L. Nesmith to M.H. Alderson in 1885 (Nesmith purchased the two lots south in 1878 and built the stone buildings in 1880). An 1885 article in *The Wilson Echo* (March 5) noted that Alderson engaged in the drug business on Michigan Avenue (Main Street) in 1884 under the name Alderson & Co. The existing building may have been built as early as 1885. An article in the September 6, 1888 *Ellsworth Reporter* reported a fire that started at the rear of Alderson's drug store, and states that the stone buildings of Nesmith and Himes to the south were spared while buildings to the north were a total loss (article does not state the fate of Alderson Drug). It is uncertain as to whether the 1888 Alderson Drug building was the existing stone building or a predecessor because advertisements for Alderson Drug were still in the local paper in 1889 (The advertisements noted that Dr. Alderson's office (physician) were located over his drug store, indicating a two-story building). County appraisal records date the construction of the

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building at 1890. However, there is physical evidence to support the earlier date. The north wall of this building is shared and there is a "ghost" sign evident on the interior of the south wall of Somer Hardware, suggesting that the wall was originally exposed as an exterior wall. That would mean that this building was in place prior to the construction of Somer Hardware around 1890, supporting the earlier date of construction. Historic photos dating to the early 1900s show the existing building in place, but the occupant is not clear. By the late 1930s, Nesmith (who owned the building to the south) had taken on another partner (Rodrick), advertising Furniture and Funeral service; an ad in the 1938 the telephone book advertised a modern funeral chapel. Nesmith expanded north into this building, possibly when they opened the funeral chapel. By 1949 the Nesmith & Rodrick ads lists Joseph Stiles as the night contact and by 1952, the business was listed in the phone book as Stiles Home Furnishings and Stiles Funeral and Ambulance Services. According to deed records, Stiles leased the property beginning in 1950 and purchased the property in 1960. Stiles Mortuary was in business from 1950-1989. The building is now part of Al's Bar & Grill.

Integrity: This building is significant as one of the early commercial buildings in downtown Wilson, serving as the local mortuary for more than fifty years. It retains integrity in the areas of location, setting and association. Although the original building is visible on the rear (alley), the existing facade covering obscures the building's original configuration and renders the building non-contributing to the district. If the facade covering was removed and the upper windows and storefront restored to their original appearance, this building could be considered a contributing element of the district.

11. **Nesmith Grocery/Himes Hardware** **Contributing**
2419 Main Street (and 418 25th Street)
Begin SW Corner Block 1, then N50', Southeasterly 73', Northeasterly 1.1.6', Southeasterly 27', Southwesterly 51.1', Northwesterly 100' to point of beginning in Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1880
Current Function: COMMERCE: restaurant
Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate
Documentation: Figures #10-13; Photo #9

Description: This is the oldest extant building(s) in the Main Street district. The building may have been the first two-story native stone building constructed on Michigan Avenue (Main Street) by W. Nesmith in 1880. Apparently constructed to house separate businesses from the beginning, Nesmith sold the south half of the building to S.P. Himes shortly after it was constructed. In early photos of the building, it always housed two separate businesses. When Himes acquired the south building in 1886, the local newspaper reported that he was expanding 30' to the east (rear) but no expansion is evident on the building. Constructed of native stone, the north half has 2/2 double hung upper windows with stone sills and segmented arched stone lintels. The original wood cornice and brackets are extant but severely deteriorated. The existing facade on the south half is a later alteration, the date of which is unknown. From historic photos, it unclear if the original facade was brick; the limestone quioning is evident in early photos. There was a bracketed metal cornice and stone lintels and sills; the cornice has been removed and the existing facade has a corbelled brick cornice. The front upper windows are not original; the existing windows are slightly shorter than the original windows and the original lintels and sills have been removed. The existing windows are double hung with brick sills. The original 2/2 double hung wood windows are extant on the south side. The building originally had shed awnings supported by wood posts on each storefront. The building was originally free standing; two additional two-story buildings were built to the north around 1885-1890, sharing the north wall of this building. There is a stairway on the south side of the building providing access to the second floor. There may have originally been a basement stairwell as well; the lintels of original basement windows are evident on the south side although the openings have been blocked in. The storefronts of both buildings have been altered. The original transom is intact on the south building but the door is a replacement, the display windows have been downsized and the bulkhead raised, altering the original proportions. A steel beam divides the upper facade from the

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storefront on the north building. Corrugated metal covers the transom and the storefront has been infilled with wood siding and a small horizontal window and contemporary door.

History: Nesmith came to Wilson (from VanBuren County, Iowa) in 1877 and engaged in the grocery business (for short periods with both W.H. Carhartt and Daniel Carbiner). Nesmith purchased the south 50' of Lots 5 and 6 in Block 1 in 1878, formed Nesmith & Co. with Joe Walmer in 1879 and built the two story building(s) in 1880. A September 9, 1880 *Wilson Echo* article announced the opening of Wilson's new Opera House at Nesmith Hall (the upper floor of the new building). In 1884 Nesmith bought out Walmer and operated the business for years. By 1885, Nesmith's business had shifted to include hardware, furniture and undertaking. Nesmith later partnered with Kendall and finally with Rodrick. In the mid-late 1930s, Nesmith and Rodrick expanded north into the adjoining building adding "a modern funeral chapel" to their ambulance and funeral services.

In 1886 Nesmith sold the south half of the building to S.P. Himes. S.P. Himes was one of the town's earliest settlers. He arrived with his father and two brothers from Pennsylvania in 1871-72. His father and brothers settled in Russell County, but S.P. Himes remained in Wilson to clerk in the store of J. Beebe and Co. He later bought out Beebe and operated the business until 1877 when he sold out to G. Lechner. He then partnered with A. Latshaw in the lumber business and in 1879 he bought J. Fowle's grocery business with A.C. Jellison. In 1886 he bought the south half of Nesmith's building and opened S.P. Himes Hardware. Himes sold the building in 1907 to Frank J. Hoch who operated Hoch Groceries and Hardware until 1924 when it was sold to McKittrick, who ran McKittrick Grocery until the mid 1940s. The building(s) have had several owners in the past fifty years. There was a gun club (shooting range) in the basement of the south building; it was also used for scout meetings and later as a manual-set bowling alley. The buildings later housed a variety store (Morgan's This & That), bars and restaurants, and have been Al's Bar and Grill for the past fifteen years.

Integrity: Among the earliest stone structures built on Michigan Avenue (Main Street), the building(s) are significant as representatives of the first permanent commercial buildings in downtown Wilson. Although the date and reason for the new brick facade on the front of the south half is undocumented, the existing facade has gained historic significance in its own right. Given the prominent corner setting, the fact that the south (side) facade is original is significant. The storefronts have been drastically altered but the buildings do maintain the traditional distinction between upper and lower facade and delineation of the transom area. Given that storefront replacement is a common alteration of historic commercial buildings, the altered storefronts do not render the building(s) non-contributing in this situation. The building clearly retains their historic commercial associations and are contributing properties to the district.

12. **Wilson Telephone Company Building**
408 25th Street

Contributing

Note – the legal description of this property is two separate parcels although the rear (north) addition is attached to the main building. South lot-Begin 22' East of SW Corner, Lot 4, Block 1, Then North 26.1', East 48', South 26.1', West 48' to point of beginning/ North Lot- Begin 26.1' North of SW Corner Lot 4, Block 1, Then North 73.8', East 70', South 73.8', West 70' to point of beginning in Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1950

Current Function: INDUSTRY: communications facility

Architectural Classification: MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

Documentation: Figure #14; Photo #10

Description: This block building with brick and glass block detailing, was constructed in 1950. The building is distinctive as one of the few Moderne style buildings in downtown Wilson. It is one of only three downtown buildings constructed during the 1950s. Originally built to house the telephone company office, the west half of the building was divided into two rooms; the front or south half was the business office and the back (north) was where the Magneto Switch board was

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located. The east half of the building was used for storage, a workshop and garage. There was an overhead garage door on the east end of the south facade. Soon after it was built, the phone company had expanded and was in need of additional office space requiring the east half of the building be turned into offices. At this time, the garage door was removed and the existing door and display window with brick surround added. The rear addition of red brick, was constructed in 1978 to house new equipment. Although it appears free standing, it is connected to the original building.

History: This building was constructed and continues to be used by the locally owned Wilson Telephone Company. Paul Grauer purchased the front (south) lot and built the building in 1950; he bought into the phone company as a partner in 1943 (with A.F. Cross) and bought out Cross in 1948. The phone company has been in the Grauer family since that time. This building was built to house the phone company offices. It was designed by local artist George Eschbaugh, who has owned and operated a local advertising company for years (Eschbaugh also designed at least one other building in downtown Wilson). Despite alterations to accommodate additional office space in the late 1950s, the phone company outgrew this building and built their current offices in 1963. The rear addition (1978) was needed when the old dial equipment was outgrown. New equipment was installed in the addition and the old building used for office space, two-way radio repair room, and a drafting and blue print room. The building continues to house phone company equipment and service functions.

Integrity: This building is a good example of its type and period of construction. Although clearly distinguished from the traditional commercial structures in downtown Wilson, the building was built during the district's second period of significance and is representative of its date of construction and original function. Despite minor alterations, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and is a contributing property to the district.

13. **City (Lions Club) Park** **Contributing**
24th Street and Avenue D
Begin NE corner Lot 4, Block 1, then E 98', S249', NWLY 125', NELY 100', NWLY 20', NELY 125' to point of beginning, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: c. 1945
Current Function: LANDSCAPE: park
Architectural Classification: OTHER
Documentation: Photos #11-12

Description: The Park is located at the southwest corner of 24th Street and Avenue D between the commercial buildings on Main Street and the Presbyterian Church at the northeast corner of the district. The park occupies approximately one half of a city block and is essentially a green space with numerous mature trees and park structures. There are two picnic shelters; one located at each end of the park. The shelters are a gable wood truss roof supported by wood posts, on a concrete slab. A public restroom facility is located off the alley on the west side of the park behind the Telephone Company building. The restroom is a small rectangular block structure with a flat roof. Native stone half-walls have been added to enclose the entrances on the north and east sides of the structure. In the center of the east side of the park, there is also a flag pole with a stepped limestone base that serves as a memorial to the community's Czech ancestors. There are wood signs at the northeast and southeast corners of the site. The park is bordered on the west by an alley and there is a perimeter concrete sidewalk on the north, east, and south sides.

History: The City of Wilson acquired three parcels of land (from Vit & Anna Hanzlicek in 1942, Joseph Pelisnek in 1945, and Sarah S. Nesmith & McKittrick in 1945) to establish a city park. The City planted trees and did some landscaping to develop a public green space. Under an agreement with the City, the local Lions Club took over the park in the late 1950s. The existing public restroom, flagpole/memorial, and picnic shelters were constructed from 1957-59, and additional landscaping was completed. The Lions Club continues to maintain and care for the park today.

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Integrity: Established as a park in 1945, the site is significant as a public green space in downtown Wilson and a contributing element to the district. The park structures (picnic shelters, restroom facility, and flag pole/memorial) were constructed after the district's period of significance and therefore rendered non-contributing. The structures could become a contributing element when they reach the fifty-year age threshold.

14. **First Presbyterian Church** **Contributing**
319 24th Street
Section 19 Township 14 Range 10W, Begin 331.7'W of NW Corner Block 1 Levit's Addition. Then S172.65', E16', S116.5', NW90', N269', E67.49' to point of beginning

Date of Construction: 1910

Current Function: RELIGION: religious facility

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

Documentation: Figure #15; Photo #13

Description: Constructed in 1910, the church has Romanesque stylistic influences, characterized by the round-arched openings. The plan is generally rectangular in form. The one story red brick structure has a natural faced limestone foundation and smooth stone sills. The roof form is high hip with multiple gable returned projections. There is a tower of awkward proportions at the northwest corner of the church that dominates the building form and serves as the main entrance. The lower 3/5ths of the tower is brick (with stone foundation); the upper portion is wood with large half-round openings at the bell. The tower is topped by a pyramidal roof with small square vertical projections at each of the four corners, each topped by small pyramidal roofs. All roofs are composition shingles. The tower has a unique 3/4 round window on the west side. A large semi-circular window is the dominant feature on the front (north) facade, flanked by two small semi-circular windows. The west facade is comprised of three bays. The tower forms the northern bay, the center bay is similar to the north facade and the southern end bay is comprised of a round-arched opening for a secondary entrance, flanked by small semi-circular windows. The main auditorium has a brass chandelier with 31 lights and frosted globes and stained glass windows that were given as memorials and remain intact today. The original pews were patterned after the pews in the Notre Dame Cathedral. A rededication ceremony was held in 1949 when the interior was 'redecorated'; an electric organ was installed, the choir loft remodeled, pews varnished and other repairs made. There have been numerous interior improvements over the years. In 1975-76 improvements were made on the exterior of the church. The brick was repointed and new cedar shingles installed on the roof; the entrance was carpeted and new doors installed at a cost totaling \$15,000. The bell tower was restored in 1997. In August of 1962 a new brick veneer, three bedroom home was started to serve as the church manse. It was built by Emery Karban and Junior Zahradnik, south of the church.

History: The building is significant as a representative of one of the first organized churches in the community. The Presbyterians built the first church building built in Wilson in 1880 and have been in continual operation since that time. The history of the First Presbyterian Church of Wilson dates to 1875, shortly after the town was founded. The first regular church services held in Wilson were conducted by Rev. H.C. Bradbury in 1875, held in a two-room school house. The upper room was shared by the Presbyterians and Methodists; the lower room was used by the Catholics. Rev. Bradbury was a Presbyterian minister who made regular trips from Lincoln, Kansas to Wilson, by horse and buggy. He was called the "Breaking Plow of the Presbytery," as he organized many Presbyterian churches in this area of the country. On May 5, 1878, A.A. Jellison was ordained an elder by Rev. Bradbury and the First Presbyterian Church of Wilson was founded. In December of the same year they purchased one acre of land from Kansas Pacific Railroad Co. for the price of ten dollars. They hired their first settled minister (Rev. W.H. Penhallegon) and in the fall of 1879, decided to build a church. The church was built with stone quarried locally at a cost of \$3,000 and dedicated on June 6, 1880. The 1880 stone structure was the first church building in Wilson, and located on the same lot that the existing church now stands. The original stone church stood for three decades. In 1910, the stone building had begun to crumble and was razed. The

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existing brick structure was constructed on the same site. The congregation worshiped in the I.O.O. F. Hall during the building period. The building of the new church took one year and cost \$12,000. It was dedicated on July 16th, 1911. The church stands today with a congregation of just over 100, with several third generation members. It is interesting to note that the congregation first worshiped with the Methodists, sharing the upper room of the local school, and now worships with the United Methodists on the last Sunday of months having five Sundays. In the recent past, the two churches have shared ministers.

Integrity: The church is representative of the second period of significance in the district, a time in which a number of institutional and commercial buildings (predominantly brick), were built in downtown Wilson. The church is the first documented brick building constructed in downtown Wilson and may be credited for influencing the transition from limestone to brick as the favored building material. The building is significant as one of the community's first churches and as a prominent institutional structure in downtown. The building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and its historic function. It is a contributing property to the district.

15. **Schermerhorn & Lang Building**
Contributing
2504 Main Street
North 43.1' of Lots 1-4, Block 5, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1893

Current Function: COMMERCE: specialty store

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN

Documentation: Figures #6-7, 16-18, 21-22; Photos #14-16

Description: Located on the corner of 25th and Main Street, this building was constructed in 1893 and is a classic example of the two part commercial block in the High Victorian era. The building represents an increase in the amount of ornament used on a facade and the incorporation of cast iron and stamped metal. A simple lower cornice divides the upper facade and storefront. Decorative cast iron columns span from the lower cornice to ground level, dividing the storefront into five bays. The storefront also wraps around the corner with one bay on the north facade. The entrance is a set of double doors in the center bay. The original storefront appears to have been paneled wood bulkheads and large display and transom windows. A canvas awning was originally located above the transom. The storefront has been altered with new display and transom windows inset between the original cast iron columns, and contemporary glass doors at the entrance. A flat metal awning now extends between the transom and display windows. The upper facade is more ornamental than most buildings in downtown Wilson. Decorative cast iron pilasters frame upper level windows and the building is topped with an ornamental metal frieze and pedimented cornice with the name "Schermerhorn & Lang" inscribed. Upper level windows are double hung; those on the north facade have ornamental metal hoods. The ground floor windows on the north facade are unique; a pointed gothic arch in shape, they appear to be the top section of traditional gothic windows. These windows were originally leaded glass but have been infilled with wood panels. The sides of the building are brick and the back is painted stone.

History: E.D. Schermerhorn came to Ellsworth County in 1866 from West Stephentown, Rensselaer County, New York. Schermerhorn and Thompson put a frame store building on Michigan Avenue (Main Street) in 1879 and opened a dry good store. As early as 1880, Schermerhorn's advertisements were located on the front page of the local paper featuring dry goods, clothing, boots & shoes, and notions. In January of 1881, W.G. Thompson sold out to J.A. Lang and opened his own store at the corner of Michigan and Saline. J.A. Lang arrived in Wilson in 1879 from Cape Girardeau, Missouri; he served as the first mayor of Wilson (after its incorporation in 1873). In 1885, Schermerhorn & Lang were reported to carry a stock of \$30,000 and have annual sales of \$75,000 (buying their goods in Chicago and New York). The existing building was built by Schermerhorn & Lang in 1893. In 1923, the partnership of Schermerhorn & Lang was dissolved;

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Lang died later the same year. Schermerhorn continued the dry goods store with his son W.E., under the name Schermerhorn and Sons (a second son, F.L. was involved in the business but died suddenly in 1912 at the age of 34). When the depression hit in 1932, the business burned, and in view of business conditions, it was not rebuilt. Schermerhorn's was one of the most prominent businesses in Wilson for over fifty years, drawing patrons from a large trade area. E.D. Schermerhorn was also a banker, serving as Vice President of the Wilson State Bank and on the boards of other banks in the county. Mr. and Mrs. E.D. Schermerhorn both died in 1936, after the store closed in 1932. W.E. Schermerhorn became a WPA executive and moved to Topeka after the closing of the store. After Schermerhorn's closed, the building was purchased by N. Weber in 1936 and was home to Weber Hardware (previously located in the Weber Peirano building) for many years. The business was operated by Leon Weber after Nick's death. The building was later owned by Alice Weber who sold it to Gerald and Alyce Klema in 1973. Over the next ten years, the building housed a number of businesses including Coast to Coast Hardware and Otasco; it then sat vacant for nearly twenty years. The Klema family retained ownership until recently when the building was purchased by the current owners, Jack and Sharon Holloway. It recently reopened as an antique mall.

Integrity: The building is historically and architecturally significant as one of the more ornate structures among the early permanent commercial buildings constructed in downtown Wilson. Although the storefront has been altered, the traditional components are intact and the alterations reflect changes common to traditional commercial structures. Despite the alterations, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and maintains its original commercial associations. It was home to one of downtown's most prominent businesses (Schermerhorn's), serving the community for more than fifty years (1879-1932). The building is a contributing property to the district.

16. **Bank of Wilson Building**

Contributing

2508 Main Street

Begin 66.1'S of NE Corner of Block 5, Then Westerly 100', N23', Easterly 100', S25' to point of beginning,
Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1882

Current Function: COMMERCE: business

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Documentation: Figures #7, 17-17, 19, 21-22; Photos #14-16

Description: This two story building, constructed of native stone in 1882 is among the earliest permanent structures in downtown Wilson and does not fall into of the typical commercial building type classifications. The building does not have a clear distinction between upper and lower facade, although the upper facade is traditional. The building has a bracketed metal cornice. It originally had a central pediment above the cornice inscribed with 'Bank of Wilson 1882,' that has been removed. The upper windows are two pairs of semi-circular double hung windows with smooth stone sills and arched lintels. The existing windows are replacement double hung windows, rectangular in shape with wood infill in the arch above the existing windows and the lintels. The lower "storefront" is comprised of a large display window on the south half with an exposed metal lintel and no traditional bulkhead; the window is an opening in the stone facade, unlike traditional storefronts. Historic photos show a retractable canvas awning in place over this window. The north half of the lower facade is comprised of two doorways. On the north end is a single paneled wood door with transom, that presumably leads to the second floor. South of the single door is a pair of paneled wood doors that serve as the main entrance to the ground floor. Both doorways have shaped stone lintels and paneled wood doors are extant.

History: The Bank of Wilson was established in June of 1882 by Anspach and Youngsman, each born in Mifflinburg, Union County, Pennsylvania. Anspach was engaged in the mercantile business in Pennsylvania and became a railroad contractor in Kansas. Youngsman was engaged in the banking business in Pennsylvania. They built the existing building on Michigan Avenue (Main Street) in 1882; Youngsman served as the cashier. The room upstairs was used for one of the

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public schools (primary). An 1885 article in *The Wilson Echo* noted that the bank "has added much to the prosperity of Wilson, and is a great accommodation to the businessmen of Wilson, and to the farmers" (March 5, 1885). In 1886, the firm of Moore & McKenzie, Real Estate Brokers was located in offices over the bank. The Bank of Wilson was only in operation for six years. An article in the December 25th, 1890 edition of *The Wilson Echo* announced that "the business circles of Wilson were shocked last Saturday when the doors closed on The Bank of Wilson, noting that the Bank had suspended payment." The Wilson State Bank had opened across the street in 1886 and apparently was thriving. By 1904, The Farmer's State Bank opened in the Weber/Peirano Building (closed in 1925). In a photo taken around 1893 showing Schermerhorn & Lang's new building on the corner, this building no longer housed the bank. A sign on the second floor says "Commercial Union. ___ Company." In subsequent years, the building housed a number of barbershops; first reportedly was Jackson, Weaver (in place in 1948), Brumfield in the 1950s, and later Whitmer, with the owner living on the 2nd floor. The building is currently occupied by Stiles Monuments.

Integrity: The building is historically and architecturally significant as the first bank in Wilson and as a representative of the first permanent commercial buildings built in downtown Wilson. Although non-traditional in its original design, with only minor modifications, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and is a contributing property to the district.

17. IOOF/Latta Drug Building

Contributing

2512-14 Main Street

North 36.5' of South 83.5' of Lots 1-4, Block 5, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1884

Current Function: COMMERCE: business

SOCIAL: meeting hall

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Documentation: Figures #7, 16-17, 20-22; Photos #14-16

Description: This two story stone building is among the earliest permanent commercial structures in downtown Wilson, constructed of native stone in 1884. The building has some unique characteristics in that individual shaped limestone 'lintels' provide a visual separation between the upper and lower facade. The configuration of the lower facade represents the original uses of the building. A "storefront" is located on the northern two thirds of the facade and served as home to a local drug store for more than eighty years. The original owner/builder was involved in the I.O.O.F. and built this building with a meeting hall on the upper floor. A stone panel, inscribed "I.O.O.F." is located in the center of the upper facade. On the south end of the lower facade is a single door, originally with a glass transom, providing outside access to the second floor. The original storefront was comprised of a set of double doors with four pane transom in the center, flanked by 2/2 display windows on each side. The lower facade has been altered. The original bays formed by the limestone piers remain as originally designed. However, new doors, display windows and possibly transoms were installed with a blond brick bulkhead. The transom area is now covered with wood and a fixed metal awning is in place over the storefront. The upper facade was originally capped with a bracketed cornice which has since been removed exposing a band of blond brick (possible repair/alteration). The upper windows have smooth stone sills and arched stone lintels. The original semi-circular double hung windows have been replaced with rectangular double hung windows with the arches infilled.

History: James Latta came to Wilson in 1887 from Philadelphia on account of his health, to engage in the drug business. He erected his first store building in 1887 (on Railroad Street?, north of the depot), dealing in drugs, medicines, paints and druggists' sundries. By 1880, advertisements for Latta & Forbes Drugs were in the local paper. By 1882, Latta Drug had expanded to include stationary in addition to drugs. Latta was a member of the Masonic order and I.O.O.F. in Philadelphia. In the spring of 1884, he built this two story stone building on Michigan Avenue (Main Street) at a cost of \$5,000. The lower room was used for the store and the upper as a hall for Odd Fellows and other societies. In 1885, it

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was reported that Latta carried stock of \$3,000 and did an annual business of \$7,000. Early advertisements are for Latta Drug but the business was later listed in the phone book under the name Uncle Jim's Drug Store, and is remembered as Uncle Jim's by local residents. The store came under the management of James Brown, Sr. following the death of James Latta in 1917. It continued operation as Brown's Drug for years under Pearl Brown and her son, James. There was a notice in the local paper in 1926 that Brown's were installing a new white Italian marble soda fountain. In the past twenty-five years, the building has housed a variety of businesses including Kenny's Construction Company, a variety store, and the current owner/occupant, an accounting office.

Integrity: This building is significant as a representative of the first permanent buildings constructed in downtown Wilson and as a prominent local business, serving as a drug store for more than eighty years. Although the building has experienced minor alterations over the years, it retains a high degree of architectural integrity and maintains its historic commercial associations. It is a contributing property to the district.

18. **Old Post Office (Tobias) Building**

Contributing

2520-28 Main Street

South 47' of Lots 1-5, block 5, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1917

Current Function: COMMERCE: business

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Figures #7, 10, 16, 21-22; Photos #14-16

Description: This two story stone building with brick facade was constructed in 1917 and is unique in that it is a two story brick structure constructed during a time when few commercial buildings were built in downtown Wilson. The building was designed by Henry Winter, an architect from Manhattan, Kansas. It was built to serve a variety of uses, originally housing the post office, a jewelry store, and offices upstairs. Although the building currently appears as one building, it was originally two buildings, as evidenced in historic photos. The original post office building is the northern two-thirds of the existing structure. Shortly after its construction, the south building was altered, and incorporated into the north building to appear as a single building (as evidenced in a 1919 photo). The original post office had a traditional storefront on the lower facade. Two entrances flanked two central display windows; each door and display window was a separate business (the post office and jewelry store). What is unclear is the configuration of the storefront on the second building, the south third of the existing lower facade. From historic photos, it appears that there was an arched tripartite window (similar to upper floor windows) with a door north of the window. The upper facade of the original post office building closely resembles the existing configuration although upper windows have been replaced. Two sets of arched tripartite windows flank a single double hung window in the center. All openings have stone sills and segmented arched brick lintels. The building on the south also had a tripartite window on the upper facade but the design differed from those on the building to the north. The south facade was rebuilt to resemble the original upper facade on the post office. Although the "new" south window resembles those on the north, it does not match exactly. A single double hung arched window was also added, matching the one on the north end of the building. All existing upper windows are replacements with infill panels filling the arch above the windows. Metal slat awnings are in place over the three sets of tripartite windows. The storefront was remodeled (circa 1940s) and black and gray structural pigmented glass installed. Contemporary display windows and doors are in place with a continuous brick bulkhead. A stairway on the south side of the building was enclosed and the storefront extended to the south to incorporate access to the second floor.

History: The building was built to house the post office and served that function for nearly fifty years (1917 – 1964). It was designed by Henry Winter, an architect from Manhattan, Kansas who also designed the Wilson Grade School in 1916. This property was purchased by W.B. Power and J. F. Tobias in 1898 from Joseph Tampier. A frame building pre-dates the existing building on this site; a 1902 ad in *The Wilson Echo* stated that Dr. Kendall, a local dentist was located

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upstairs in the Powers-Tobias building. In 1914 Power sold his share to Tobias and in 1917 Tobias built the existing two-story building. In 1918 Tobias signed a lease with the US Post Office. An early photo shows that William Slimm moved his Jewelry Store into the building and W. E. Kendall, a local dentist was located upstairs (next door to the post office). W.E. Kendall opened his dentistry practice in Wilson in 1899 and by 1915 had one of the largest practices in this part of the state (*Ellsworth Reporter*, April 9, 1914). A 1982 article in *The Wilson World* noted that M.H. Alderson, one of the first doctors in Wilson, and Bill Slimm, a jeweler, were two of the first businessmen to rent office space in the McKittrick building in the 1890s (the building was later the Central/Cipra Hotel at Michigan & Front Street; current location of G.B. Plus Convenience Store). In 1920's advertisements, Slimm's Jewelry had expanded to carry jewelry, stationary and books; it was open through the late 1930s. By 1929, the phone directory lists Gray W. Cooney as a local dentist and Kendall was no longer listed. In 1952 Tobias sold the building to Cooney, who continued to lease to the post office until the new post office was built in 1964. Cooney had his practice in the building for some time, prior to purchasing the building. The building has housed a variety of businesses over the years including Gambles (a farm implement store) in the 1940s, and later a bakery, a restaurant, and Maggie Ney's beauty shop on the ground floor, and apartments upstairs. Cooney was a mason and remodeled the 2nd floor to include a kitchen and dining room for the masons. A fire door was installed on the second floor between this building and the IOOF building to the north for access between the two spaces. Cooney sold the building to Robert Malir, the current owner in 1979. Malir had been a tenant in the building since 1965.

Integrity: The building is historically significant as the town's post office for nearly fifty years. Architecturally, the building is significant as one of the few two story brick facades in downtown Wilson, and as one of the last two story buildings built in downtown. The early alteration of the building, incorporating the south third of the existing building, was done shortly after the building was constructed and has gained significance in its own right. Likewise, the 1940s storefront alterations, although not original, are representative of common alterations of the period and fall within the district's second period of significance. The building is a contributing property to the district.

19. Tobias Water Tower (old City Jail)

Contributing

Off alley behind the Tobias Building at 2520-28 Main Street

A tract of land 18' x 18' in the southwest corner of Lot 5 in Block 5, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1907

Current Function: RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker

Architectural Classification: OTHER

Documentation: Figure #10; Photo #17

Description: The water tower is a round structure, approximately 18' in diameter, 25' tall, built of coursed, natural faced, native stone. There is a single doorway, one lower window, and two upper windows, all with stone sills, and segmented arched lintels. Bars were installed over the windows in 1956. When functioning as a water tower, there was a supply tank and pump on the top that have since been removed. The existing roof is a conical form, standing seam metal roof.

History: A municipal water and light system was put into operation in 1911, the year Wilson's population reached 1000. Prior to that time, the town had several water towers serving different areas of town, mainly for resident's private use and fire safety. The round stone tower, located off the alley in the rear of the old post office, is called the Tobias water tower. It was constructed by the City of Wilson in 1907. A legal agreement dated May 10th, 1907 documents a lease between W.B. Power and J.F. Tobias (owners of the Powers & Tobias Building) and the City of Wilson "to lease ... a certain tract of land eighteen feet by eighteen feet in the southwest corner of Lot Five in Block 5 in the City of Wilson for the purpose of erecting there a tower and putting down a well there on to be used by said city for fire and sprinkling purposes, for a period of ninety-nine years or as long as the City shall use it for said purposes." In payment for lease of the land, the City provided water to the occupants of the building. The building referenced in this agreement, The Powers & Tobias building, was a (wood frame) predecessor to the existing (former post office) building. In 1914 Power sold out to Tobias

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and Tobias built the existing post office building in 1917. The water tower has an area on the ground floor that was used by the City Constable to house his prisoners until the train or wagon came to take them to the county seat. The tower was used as the city jail until the City built the new fire station/jail in 1963. It is also reported that for a short time, the base of the round building was rented by a temporary worker. Today, the structure stands as a historic marker, the city's "old jail."

Integrity: The structure is architecturally and historically significant as a representative of the city's early water towers and native stone construction. Although the supply tank and pump were removed years ago, the tower retains a high degree of architectural integrity. It functions as a historic marker representative of its original function as a water tower and later function as the city jail. It is a contributing property to the district.

20. **Valetor Cleaners Building**
2530 Main Street
North 25' of Lots 30-32 in Block 5, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Contributing

Date of Construction: 1953

Current Function: COMMERCE: business

Architectural Classification: MODERN MOVEMENT

Documentation: Figure #23; Photo #18

Description: The building is a simple, one story block building with a brick facade built in the 1950s and differs in style from the traditional one story brick buildings built in the preceding quarter century. The building was built to house Valetor Cleaners (replacing a former two-story frame building on the site); the original use as a cleaners accounts for the departure from traditional commercial style buildings of the period. The block structure was reportedly built inside of the original two-story frame building and then the frame building removed, exposing the new structure. This unique construction method was possibly used to enable the business, Valetor Cleaners, to continue operation during construction. The building is free standing with a vacant lot to the south and an alley on the north. There are square, fixed pane windows on the north and south facades. The front of the building has a central entrance with a display window to the south and a high horizontal slot to the north that is infilled with glass block. There was originally a flat metal awning extending over the display window and entrance that has since been removed. The building was constructed with a flat roof and brick parapet; a low gable roof has been installed with horizontal wood siding in the gable end. Wood siding has also been installed on the sides of the building.

History: The first building on this property was a two story frame building built around 1875-1880; the ownership of the original building changed hands many time and was purchased by George Noland in 1942. Noland operated Valetor Cleaners and constructed the existing structure in 1953. The new (existing) building was built by Emery Karban, a local contractor, also to be used as Valetor Cleaners. The lot to the south of the building has been vacant since the construction of this building in 1953. In the 1940s, a small rectangular 'shack' was located near the sidewalk on that lot. The structure, described by locals as looking like an outhouse, was home to Smitty's popcorn stand who served popcorn daily on Main Street. Following the closing of Valetor Cleaners, the building was owned for a short time by Twin County Gas Co. in the 1990s. The building was purchased by the current owner, Gene Burns in 1997 and is leased to an insurance office.

Integrity: This building is one of only three buildings constructed in downtown Wilson in the 1950s. Although it is unique in its departure from the design of traditional commercial buildings, it is representative of the period and its original function as a service business. The addition of the gabled roof did alter the building's form but the original configuration is evident. Although visible, the installation of wood siding on the side facades does not impact the contributing facade. Despite these alterations, the building does retain architectural integrity and is a contributing member to the district.

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21. **Klema IGA Building**
2526-46 Main Street
Lots 28 & 29 and S100' of Lots 30-32 in Block 5, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Contributing

Date of Construction: 1932/1946/1950

Current Function: COMMERCE: specialty store
VACANT

Architectural Classification: MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne [1950 building]

LATE 10th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style [1932 buildings and 1946 building]

Documentation: Figures #24-26; Photos #18-19, 29

Description: This property (defined by a single legal description) is comprised of four adjacent buildings that are connected and occupied by the same business. The main corner building is a one story, tan brick building constructed in 1946 by Klema grocery. The building has a raised parapet at the corner, defining the entrance but is otherwise void of ornament. The entrance is a set of double doors with transom and sidelights and there are display windows on Main Street and on 26th Street. The building to the north is a traditional one story brick commercial building with a central entrance flanked by display windows and transom. The transom has been covered with horizontal wood siding and the doorway altered to facilitate entry into each side of the building. The north display window appears original; the south has been altered, downsized with peach structural pigmented glass to accommodate a smaller display window. The building has a simple brick corbelling at the parapet. This storefront is the only one of the four buildings, not occupied by the grocery store; it still functions as offices although currently vacant. The northern most building is also a one story brick building, constructed in 1932. It has a stepped parapet and an inset panel above the storefront, inscribed "1932 Gregor", representing Gregor, the original owner. The storefront of the building has been infilled with vertical wood siding. The fourth building, west of the corner is also a one story brick building with a high parapet. This building was constructed in the early 1950s to house a Laundromat and was designed by local artist, George Eschbaugh. The design is unique and differs from the traditional downtown commercial buildings. It is one of only three buildings constructed in the 1950s in downtown Wilson and one of the few 'Modern' style buildings in the district. The facade is asymmetrical with a vertical masonry opening infilled with glass block on the upper facade. There are contrasting horizontal bands on the upper facade. A flat metal awning extends over the storefront and wraps around the building to the west side. The storefront has a central entrance flanked by display windows on each side and the neon 'Laundromat' sign is extant in the window.

History: The history of this property represents a history of one of the town's most prominent grocers, the Klema family. The corner property was purchased in 1946 by Jerry Klema. Previously, this area had a number of wood frame structures built before the turn of the century. Klema built the existing corner building in 1946; the new store Klema IGA Market was said to be one of the finest stores in central Kansas. Klemas moved into the new store from their former location north of the corner building. Over the years, Klemas expanded into and around the adjacent buildings to the north and west. The building immediately north of the corner housed Gustafson Jewelry in the south half and a beauty shop on the north in the mid 1940s. It was later home to the local newspaper - The Wilson World, and it currently a vacant office. The date of construction is undocumented but reported to be 1932 in appraisal records. To the north, the Gregor building was constructed by F. R. Gregor in 1932 and housed the Gregor's clothing store. Gregor's later moved across the street to a location later demolished by the new bank building (1985). A wood frame building was located to the west of the grocery store, occupied by Swartz Brothers Implement for years and was later occupied by a pool hall and barbershop. The building was demolished and the existing building constructed by Jerry Klema, shortly after building the corner grocery store. The building was built to be used as a Laundromat in the front and storage for the grocery store in the rear. The grocery store expanded into all three adjacent buildings over the years. Klemas continued to operate the business until about ten years ago. Malcom Shaw, who operated a grocery store in the old Levitt's Department Store Building on 25th Street since 1953, purchased Klema IGA in the early 1990s and moved into the corner location. Shaw's operated the grocery until this year; it was recently sold and continues operation as a grocery store.

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Integrity: The building is significant as the home of the community's major grocery store for more than fifty years and continues in its original use today. The building is representative of the mid to latter part of the second period of significance in the district, distinguished primarily by one story brick buildings. The corner building and the adjacent building to the west retain a high degree of architectural integrity, closely resembling their original appearance. The adjacent buildings to the north have experienced some storefront alterations as the grocery store expanded, however, as a single entity (the grocery store), the property retains a fair degree of integrity and its original commercial associations. It is a contributing property to the district.

22. Wilson State Bank Building

Contributing

2505 (and 2503 ½) Main Street

North 50' of Lots 14-15 & North 50' of West 12.5' of Lot 13 in Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1886

Current Function: COMMERCE: professional
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Documentation: Figures #11, 16, 27-29; Photo #20

Description: This two story building, of native stone, was constructed by the bank in 1886. It occupies a corner lot and has always been freestanding. The lot to the south is now vacant; a building was previously located on that site but did not abut the existing building. The building is a two part commercial block structure, originally constructed with entrances on the west (front) and north facades. The building is topped with an ornamental metal cornice with brackets and arched extensions, originally inscribed 'Wilson State Bank 1886.' Upper level windows are semi-circular double hung windows with smooth stone sills and arched metal hoods. The hoods are missing on the south facade. There is a covered, exterior staircase on the south facade, providing access to the second floor. The original storefront was clearly Italianate in style, divided into three bays with cast iron columns. The entrance was a set of double doors, recessed in the center bay. The bulkhead appears to have been wood and there were large display windows with no transom. The ground floor is three steps above grade accessed by steps from the sidewalk. There was also a "storefront" entry on the east end of the north facade. It appears to have been a similar configuration with a central recessed entry flanked by display windows on each side. There were five double hung lower windows (identical to the upper windows) on the north facade, west of the storefront entry. In an historic photo (circa 1888-89), there appears to have been an exterior basement stairwell along the north facade, with a metal gate and railing. The building originally housed the telephone company in the rear of the ground floor, the bank in the front, doctor's offices on the second floor, and shops in the basement - explaining the multiple building entrances. In 1910, the bank remodeled the lower portion of the facade. It was at this time that the storefront took on its existing configuration. The storefront is still three bays wide but the cast iron columns were removed and two large stone columns installed. The entrance was moved to the north end of the building - a single door with sidelight. The display windows have wood paneled bulkheads and there is a leaded glass transom at each bay. A wood lower cornice caps the storefront. New steps were installed at this time. Since the 1910 remodeling, the only obvious alteration to the storefront is the installation of a new glass door and sidelight at the building entrance. The lower portion of the north facade was also altered in 1910, drastically changing the configuration and appearance. At this time, the phone company moved from the rear of the building and the rear entrance (north "storefront") was removed. Additionally, the original lower double hung windows (that matched the upper windows) were removed. New openings were cut in the stone to accommodate three large horizontal openings which are now infilled with glass block. A fourth, smaller opening received the same treatment at the east end of the north facade. It appears that the exterior basement staircase was removed at this time. There is no evidence that the upper windows were altered in the 1910 remodeling. However, 1976 photograph illustrates that upper windows have been replaced. The new windows are rectangular double hung windows, with the arch between the window and arched lintel infilled. The only other contemporary alteration appears to have been the installation of a stucco coating on the rear facade.

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History: Reported to be the oldest bank in Ellsworth County, the Wilson State Bank building was constructed of native stone in 1886 at a cost of \$8,300. The building served as home to Wilson State Bank for nearly 100 years. *The Wilson Echo* reported that the lot was cleared in August of 1886 and the first advertisement for the bank appeared the following week on August 10. The original Bank Directors were J.A. Lang, S.P. Himes, A.A. Jellison, and H.P. Churchill. The excavation was done by John Marsh and the stonework by Johnson & Keller. The main floor housed the bank; the Telephone Company was located at the rear and stairs on the south side of the building led to two doctors offices upstairs. The basement housed a barber shop and shoe repair shop. By November of the same year, Claussen's opened a millenary shop in the basement. This building served as home of the Wilson State Bank until the bank built modern facilities with a drive-through window in 1985, where they still reside. Wilson State Bank has continuously served the community since its opening in 1886. This building is now occupied by a law office with apartments above.

Integrity: The building is historically significant as the home of Wilson State Bank for nearly one hundred years and architecturally significant as a representative of the first period of permanent construction in downtown Wilson. The existing building primarily reflects the 1910 alterations. These alterations were a result of the building's change in use and have gained significance in their own right. Despite the alterations, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and is a contributing property to the district.

23. Horejsi Building

Non-Contributing

2509 Main Street

South 25' of North 75' of Lot 11-15, Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: c.1924

Current Function: HEALTH CARE: medical business/office

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Photo #21

Description: This building is a one story brick building constructed in the mid 1920s. No historic photos have been found to show the original building. Presumably, it was similar to existing adjacent buildings, built during the same period. The building was remodeled in 1995 by Hanzlicek Construction in Wilson, converting the building to its current use as a medical office. The existing horizontal wood siding and the shake shingle awning was installed at that time. The existing configuration retains a recessed central entrance flanked by display windows on each side.

History: The property was sold to Joseph L. Horejsi in 1923 and an agreement on record with the Register of Deeds dated March 1924, documents payment by Frank Novak to Joseph Horejsi for one half interest in the south wall of the building. A 1976 newspaper article featuring an interview with Ernest Skalicky stated that Mr. Skalicky who had a tire vulcanizing shop in a frame building one lot south, moved one door north in 1926 and began selling automobiles (Mrs. Skalicky was a Horejsi). Skalicky Motor Co. was listed in the 1929 phone book and advertisements for the Skalicky Tire Shop were in the local paper in the 1940s. The building was in Horesji's ownership until 1993. The current owner, Dr. Kepka purchased the building, originally for storage, from the Honomichaels brothers who had a roofing company. Kepka then decided to use the building for his medical practice, remodeled and occupies the building today.

Integrity: The building retains integrity in the areas of location, setting, and association. Although the basic form of the one story brick building remains intact, it is covered by wood siding rendering this building non-contributing to the district. If the siding was removed and the brick storefront is in place, the building could be considered a contributing element to the district.

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24. **Novak Building** **Contributing**
2515 Main Street
North 25' of South 75' of Lots 11-15, Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: c. 1929

Current Function: COMMERCE: specialty store

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Photo #21

Description: This is a one story brick building was constructed in the late 1920s. It is a typical example of the enframed window wall commercial building type. The brick is two tone, tan and buff, laid in stretcher bond course but alternating brick colors to form a pattern. Brick piers frame the storefront. The upper facade is accented by a course of vertically laid brick and a stepped parapet with a brick cap. The store front is comprised of three bays; a recessed central entrance flanked by display windows on each side. The transom is covered with vertical wood siding.

History: Ernest Skalicky opened a vulcanizing shop in a frame building on this lot in 1919; in 1926 he moved one lot north and shortly after the frame building was raised. Frank Novak purchased the property in 1920 and entered into an agreement with J. Horejsi in 1924 and with A. Sula in 1929 purchasing interest in the south and north walls (respectively) of the buildings on each side of this lot, with the noted intention of building a brick building and tying into the existing wall. The building was built by Fred Karban, a local builder/contractor listed in the phone directories in 1929-43. Deed records document a lease from Frank Novak to Wamhoff Motor Co. in 1931 (Wamhoff Motor of Ellsworth opened a shop in Wilson in 1928, originally in the UP Garage). The building housed a number of businesses over the years including: Hillsinger Chevrolet, Novak Dress Shop, Jack Anderson's Paint Shop, Miller's Meat Market, Grubb Clothing, and J&L Department Store. Frank Novak sold the building to Edward Shiroky in 1975 and his wife opened the existing business, LaShiro's Boutique (fabric store) in 1976.

Integrity: This building is significant as a representative of the latter half of the district's second period of significance, distinguished primarily by the construction of one-story brick commercial buildings. Although the transom is covered, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and its historic commercial association. It is a contributing property to the district.

25. **Sula Meat Market Building** **Contributing**
2519 Main Street
North 25' of South 50' of Lots 11-15, Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Date of Construction: 1890/1940s brick facade

Current Function: COMMERCE: business

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Figure #10; Photo #21

Description: This building is a one story stone building with a brick facade. The building was originally constructed around 1890 (according to appraisal records) making it one of the few one-story buildings constructed of native stone around the turn of the century. However, the existing building has a brick facade that is representative of the district's second period of significance, comprised primarily of one-story brick buildings. The brick facade was reportedly installed in the 1940s and is representative of that period. The brick facade is similar to neighboring brick buildings constructed in the 1920s. No historic photos have been found to document the original appearance of the building. It is reported that the original ground floor was above grade (like many of the early buildings on Main Street) with steps at the front of the building. When Sula closed his meat market in the 1940s, he reportedly filled the basement with sand and brought the

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first floor down to ground level in the front part of the building (leaving the basement in the rear). It was at this time that the new brick facade was reportedly installed. The existing facade is buff brick with orange brick accents (patterns) on the upper facade. The brick frames the storefront on each end of the building and forms the bulk head for the display windows. The entrance is recessed on the south end of the front facade. Contrary to traditional storefront configurations of the 1920s and 30s, there is no transom, supporting the 1940s date for the facade alteration. A flat metal awning extends above the storefront.

History: The original owner of the building is unclear; it reportedly housed a saddle and leather shop in early years. Anton Sula purchased the property in 1923 from J.H. Baum. According to an agreement on file at the Register of Deeds, Frank Novak, who owned the lot to the north of this building, purchased interest in the north wall of this building from Sula in 1929. The Sula Meat Market is remembered by long time Wilson residents and was listed in 1929 and 1943 phone directories. Roy Shaw came to Wilson in 1932-33 and went to work for Anton Sula. In 1943 Shaw went into the Navy and Sula closed the store. When Shaw returned in 1945 after the war, he went into partnership with Sula and reopened the store. Shaw later purchased the business. By 1949, Shaw Meat Market (and later Shaw Meats and Groceries) was located in the building (until Shaw expanded to the Levitt Department Store on 25th Street in 1950). This building later housed Ben Franklin Variety Store (owned/operated by Mrs. Walsh and later Gail Weinhold), and an alterations shop owned by Peggy Hanzlicek. Robert Grauer (Wilson Telephone Company) bought the building from Hanzlicek and opened the phone company's computer store, Comlink. The building now houses Grauer Management, the holding company for Wilson Telephone.

Integrity: The building is significant as a representative of both the first and second periods of significance for the district. It is one of the few one-story commercial structures built of native stone around the turn of the century and the existing brick facade is representative of the construction of one-story brick commercial structures that occurred from the 1920s through early 1950s. Although the existing facade represents a later alteration, it has gained significance in its own right. The building is a contributing property to the district.

26. **A. F. Cross Building**
2523 Main Street
South 25' of Lots 11-15, Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Contributing

Date of Construction: c. 1925

Current Function: COMMERCE: specialty store

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Figure #10; Photo #21

Description: The building is a one and a half story brick building, constructed in the mid 1920s. It is a traditional enframed window wall commercial building type. No historic photos have been found to clearly document the original appearance of the storefront. It is reported that the storefront was recessed and that steps leading to the basement and ground floor were located at the front of the building. The ground floor is still above grade and the basement used today. An entrance on the south side has always served as an entrance to the front and rear spaces of the ground floor. The original owner, Cross is reported to have become upset with the men's club who occupied the basement and had the basement filled in with dirt. It is reported that in the 1960s when Art Soukup redid the front of the building and installed the existing shake awning; the front stairs remained in place. The basement may have been cleaned out at this time because it was later reused. When the current owners, Kepkas, purchased the building, it was run down (the last renters were raising parakeets in the back of the building). At this time stairs at the front of the building, leading to the basement and ground floor were a safety hazard; they were removed and the existing "terrace" installed.

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The only historic photo of the property is an aerial photo with few details visible. In the photo, the general form of the building appears the same as today. There were awnings on the front of the building and individual awnings at the openings on the south facade. The front facade has a corbelled brick parapet with a stone panel inscribed "A.F. Cross." The building shares a party wall with the building to the north. The storefront was recessed and there was a center brick column, and brick pier on the south end. The shake awning extends from the recessed storefront, past the plane of the upper facade. The "terrace" installed in 1997 is flush with the upper facade, has a metal railing with vertical wood siding on the base. There does not appear to be any alteration of original openings on the side and rear facades. The rear of the building has a stucco coating over the brick. An overhead garage door is in place at the rear of the building, off of the ally. The door is obviously contemporary but the garage door opening is probably original given the fact that the phone company originally used this space for a shop. The south facade has two building entrances, one on the end bay, near the rear of the building where a central door is flanked by two double hung windows. The primary building entrance is located on the south facade, flanked by a band of four windows on each side. A ramp has been installed at this entrance to make the building accessible. All of the windows and doors are contemporary replacements and there are canvas awnings in place at the main entrance and on the bands of four windows on the south facade.

History: Wilson had phone service around the turn of the century; the oldest directory available is 1907 and that directory lists A.F. Cross as the manager. The Spencer family was the owner of the early phone company and sold it to Cross. Cross later sold to Bandaner who owned the company during a major ice storm which left him in financial ruin. In the mid-1920s, Cross again took over the phone company and built this brick building. The phone company was located in the rear of the building, an office in the front and a men's club in the basement (The "Wilson Club" was listed in 1929/30/38 phone directories). Cross sold one-third interest in the phone company to Paul Grauer in 1943; Grauer bought out Cross in 1948 and moved from this building in 1950. The Grauer family still owns the phone company today. Marion Hill (Cross) sold this building to Frank A. Dlabal in 1952 (who had his office in this building at the time). Dr. Dlabal was a local physician and the Ellsworth County Coroner. Art Soukup owned the building in the 1960s; he remodeled and installed the existing shake awning. The Catholic ladies later operated a thrift shop in the basement (closed in 1990) and Joan Zamrzla operated a quilt shop on the first floor. Jennifer Kepka, the current owner, bought the building from Roger Dowden in 1996. Kepkas remodeled and opened the existing businesses, a gift shop and sportsman lodge on the ground floor and a fitness center in the basement.

Integrity: This building is historically significant as the original home to the local phone company. The original building was unique with its recessed storefront and original entrances on the south side. Although the building has experienced substantial alteration after the period of significance of the district including the installation of the shake awning, replacement windows and the storefront 'terrace,' the original configuration remains intact and evident. With its corner setting, the prominent south facade, with only minor modification, is significant. The building continues to convey its historic commercial associations and is a contributing property to the district.

27. **Levitt's Department Store (Original City Hall)**
417 25th Street
Lots 8-10 in Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

~~Non-Contributing~~
Contributing
(updated 2/17/2010)

Date of Construction: 1886 (1950s slipcover)

Current Function: VACANT

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th and EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Figure #30; Photo #22

Description: The building is a two story building, constructed of native stone in 1886. It is a two part commercial block structure originally built to house City Hall on the second floor and a department store on the ground floor. The City Hall was designed to also serve as a community hall/opera house. A date stone on the front of the building is inscribed 'City

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Hall 1886.' The only documentation of the original appearance is an artist's sketch from the early 1900s. The building appeared to have a traditional storefront with display windows flanking a central entrance, and a transom. The drawing illustrates an awning above the transom supported by wood posts. The upper facade had four arched double hung windows with segmented stone lintels. The stone facade extended above the roof line to form a gabled parapet. The entrance to the basement and 2nd floor was originally on the rear (south side) of the building. In the 1890s, the building was expanded by approximately one-third at the rear (south). At that time, exterior stairs were installed on the east side of the building to provide access to the 2nd floor. In the early 1950s the building was purchased by Shaws and remodeled for their grocery store. It was at this time that the metal slip cover was installed on the upper facade and metal panels on the lower facade. The storefront was remodeled at that time and a flat metal awning installed. Shaw also added an entrance on the east, an accessible ramp for the elderly, and a stucco coating on the limestone on the side and rear facades. The windows on the side and rear facades appear to be original but are in poor condition. There are one story shed additions on the east side and rear of the building; the one on the side is modern but the rear addition is older. With the exception of the side and rear windows, the original character of the building is obscured by the 1953 alterations.

History: According to the Registrar of Deeds, R.T. Levitt purchased this property from Hedges in 1886. R.T. Levitt, born in Wisconsin, came to Wilson in 1876. He engaged in the dry goods business in August, 1884. The September 4th edition of *The Wilson Echo* announced the opening of R.T. Levitt's dry good store on Michigan Street (specific location unclear). In June of 1886, *The Echo* reported that "R.T. Levitt has undertaken to build one of the largest store buildings, and that excavation was underway." The building was completed at a cost of \$6,000 and Levitt moved to the new building in December of 1886. The upstairs was used for City Hall and community meetings/events including high school prom and graduation services. The upstairs was also used as an opera house; the first exhibition advertised in January of 1887. In 1887, the black gentleman call "Blind Boone" played at the opera hall. John William Boone sang with the Troubadours and performed stomp dancing. By 1889 Levitt's advertisements were under the name Levitt Bros. (R.T. and G.L.). R.T. Levitt died and G.L. Levitt took over the business; later advertisements were under the name G.L. Levitt & Co. Department Store. Levitt's Department Store was sold to the Farmers Store (a farmer's cooperative grocery store), which was in business from the 1920s through the 1940s. Roy Shaw purchased the building in the early 1950s and opened a grocery store featuring his specialty homemade sausages. Shaw occupied the building until the early 1990s when he moved to the former Klema IGA building on Main Street. The building is currently vacant.

Integrity: The slipcover on this building obscures its original architectural features. It no longer conveys its historic character and lacks architectural integrity and thus is a non-contributing property to the district. However in the future, if the slipcover was removed and the original materials and configuration remain intact, it could be a contributing element to the district.

28. **Wilson State Bank**
422 26th Street
Lots 16-19, Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Non-Contributing

Date of Construction: 1985
Current Function: COMMERCE: financial institution
Architectural Classification: OTHER
Documentation: Photos #23 & 29

Description: The new bank building was constructed in 1985. It is a one story building with brick veneer and a low gable roof. The building faces south (26th Street) and is setback from the public sidewalks on the south and west sides. A drive through is in place on the east side of the building, accessed on the south. At the rear of the building, there is a paved parking area with access off the alley north of the property.

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History: The block was cleared to make room for construction of the new bank. Prior to the 1920s, most all of the buildings in this block were wood frame buildings with high, false facades. In 1992, a fire started at Charles and Buford Ruben's cafe on the corner and destroyed most buildings on the block. Brick buildings were built; the corner building has housed the Jackson & Buhler Cafe, the Wear Variety Store, the Rabus Brother's Cafe, and Carl Bisterfelt's pool hall on the south; a succession of pool halls in the basement; and Charles and Buford Turner's new cafe, Guy Trimble's cafe and Chockley's cafe on the north. The building north of the corner housed Frank Mohesky's bakery and later Tom Goodman's leather repair, a beer parlor/pool hall with several owners, and finally Ray Schneider's pool hall and rock shop. The next building to the north housed a restaurant, John Kasper's store, Jack Anderson and Dave Lilstron's paint shop, Jesse Whitmer's barbershop, Ray Schneider's rock shop and last, Burns and Doran Insurance. On the lot next to the alley, the building housed Frank Gregor's store, Stephenson's clothing store, Rich Kasper's clothing store (later Kasper and Dolezal) and then a television repair shop ran by Johnny Summers and later Bob Bohls.

Integrity: The building, constructed in 1985 is contemporary construction with no relationship to the historic character of the district. It is a non-contributing property.

29. **Vocasek (Peppy Jo's) Barbershop**
418 26th Street
Lot 20 in Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Contributing

Date of Construction: 1928

Current Function: DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Architectural Classification: LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Documentation: Photos #24-25

Description: Built in the late 1920s, this building is one of the few two story buildings constructed in downtown Wilson after the turn of the century and one of only two brick two-story commercial structures. It was built to house a barber shop on the ground floor with the owner's residence above and continued to serve that function until recently. The residence is still occupied. The building has always been freestanding, located just west of the Midland Hotel. The upper facade is unadorned with the exception of a course of vertically laid brick near the top of the parapet. There are two pairs of double hung windows on the upper facade; the existing windows are replacements. The lower facade resembles traditional storefronts but the brick facade forms an integral base, rather than bulkhead. Basement windows are visible at ground level. On the west end of the south (front) facade, there was originally a door to the 2nd floor residence. This opening is now infilled; the residents use the central entrance. East of the second floor entrance was the original storefront - a central door flanked by display windows on each side. The existing door is a contemporary replacement. Fixed shake shingle awnings have been installed over the lower facade and at the upper windows. A stucco coating has been applied to side and rear facades. A contemporary garage has been built at the rear of the lot facing the alley (c. 1960s-70s); it is barely visible from the front of the property. The yard between the building and the garage is fenced.

History: Joseph Vocasek purchased the property from James M. Brown in 1922 and constructed the present building in 1928. Joseph Vocasek emigrated from Bohemia with his parents in 1910. He had a tonsorial parlor (barbershop) in Bohemia and went to work as a barber in Wilson in 1910 (with Karl Jadrnicek in the basement of Turner Hall, the Opera House). He later moved to Jess Whitmer's barber shop on Main Street before opening his own shop in this building in 1928. Peppy Joe was granted his Master Barber Certificate in 1930 at the age of 17 and after graduating high school, followed in his father's profession at Russell for the next 10 years. He worked briefly as a make-up artist for 20th Century Fox in California and joined the service in 1941. He came out of the German POW camp in 1945 and spent over 10 years in army and veterans' hospitals. He returned to Wilson in 1968, bought out his father and continued the barbershop until his death in 2002. The Vocasek name is thought to be the longest in continuing service as a barber in Kansas, from 1910 to 2002. The building also served as the Vocasek residence throughout.

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Integrity: The building has experience some alteration including replacement windows and doors but the size and configuration of the original openings is intact. Despite the former alterations, the building continues to convey its historic associations and otherwise retains its architectural integrity. It is a contributing property to the district. The detached rear garage is contemporary construction and a non-contributing element to the district.

30. **The Midland Hotel**
414 26th Street
Lots 21-24, Block 6, Original Township & Bosland Addition

Contributing
(Individually Listed on National Register)

Date of Construction: 1889

Current Function: DOMESTIC: hotel

Architectural Classification: LATE VICTORIAN

Documentation: Figure #31; Photos #24-26

Description: The Midland Hotel was built in 1899; it opened August 7th, 1899 as the Hotel Power in downtown Wilson. The hotel is a three story native limestone structure with a partial basement. The plan form is a modified rectangle with a "U" shaped corridor configuration that feeds rooms on the second and third floors, originally boasting 27 rooms. Gutted by fire in 1902, the interior was destroyed and subsequently rebuilt using the existing exterior walls. A square shaped rear addition at the north east corner of the original building was constructed in 1915 to expand capacity of the hotel [1915 addition was 32'x32' at the NE corner, giving the hotel 18 additional rooms at a cost of just over \$3,000]. The Midland Hotel is a Late Victorian vernacular limestone building with stylistic influences from the Second Empire, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Richardsonian Romanesque architectural styles. Distinguishing features include a metal mansard roof with shed dormers, 1/1 double hung windows, and twin tripartite windows flanking the central bay which is comprised of an arched main entrance and adjacent storefront on the front facade. The Hotel recently underwent extensive rehabilitation that restored its use as a hotel. The project did involve a sub-grade rear addition to accommodate mechanical and operational functions but with the exception of an access well off of the rear alley, the basement expansion is not visible above ground. Significant features have been repaired and restored, all work meeting the Secretary of Interior's Standards.

History: Located directly across from the U.P. Railroad tracks (and originally, the depot-removed in 1983), the hotel catered to railroad workers and travelers. One of the unique features of the hotel was the Sample Room. Vendors and salesmen traveling the railroad to sell their wares would haul trunks of merchandise and samples to the hotel's basement for display in the Sample Room. Area and local merchants came to preview and order merchandise to sell in their establishments. Constructed in 1899 by W.D. Power, the interior of the hotel was gutted by fire on November 10, 1902. The hotel was rebuilt, renamed The Midland Hotel, and entered a period of prosperity. Running at maximum occupancy, a rear addition was constructed in 1915 to expand capacity. The Midland continued operating as a hotel until its closure in 1988. It recently reopened as a hotel, featuring a restaurant and bar.

Integrity: The Midland Hotel was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. It is significant architecturally as a distinctive example of a Late Victorian, vernacular limestone structure and as an important component of the community's commerce over the past century. The building retains a high degree of architectural integrity and maintains its historic function. It is a contributing property to the district.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street is significant under National Register Criteria A in the area of Commerce and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The district includes the north half (north of the railroad tracks) of the community's central business district. Composed primarily of traditional commercial properties highlighted by prominent 'set-piece' buildings, the district is representative of the development of the community of Wilson from the late nineteenth through the early to mid-twentieth century. The structures form a cohesive, defined district that illustrates the continuum of local commercial, civic, and religious architecture constructed during this period. This collection of buildings convey the progression of design during this period reflecting the style, form, function and materials associated with the development of downtown Wilson.

The Main Street District represents one of three historic districts in downtown Wilson, defined primarily by the railroad right-of-way that bisects the central business district, by the function of the districts and adjacent new construction that combine to form distinct boundaries of the three districts. The Main Street District is comprised of 27 contributing buildings (one of which is listed individually on the National Register), one contributing structure and one contributing site. There are eleven non-contributing resources including eight buildings and three structures. The district reflects two periods of significance: 1880-1904 and 1905-1953, defined primarily by building materials and building form distinctive in each period. The start of this range reflects the date of construction of the earliest extant buildings in the district and the end range reflects the construction of the most recent contributing building. The period of significance acknowledges historic alterations that are representative of the evolution of commercial styles and building functions, and accepts changes to buildings within this period as significant to the district.

Four architectural classifications are represented by the buildings within the district. The dominate classification is Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movement Commercial Style. The second most common classification is Late Victorian including the Italianate style. A few of the district's resources fall under the Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals and the Modern Movement.

ELABORATION

The significance of the Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street is established by the following overview of the commercial and architectural development of Wilson from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN WILSON

In *The History of Wilson*, Frank Sibrava notes that many towns and cities owe their specific location, indeed their very existence, to some great river or thoroughfare. Wilson, and its predecessor, Wilson Creek Station, owe their heritage to the Smoky Hill River. The Smoky Hill Route to the mountains was long a favorite road for prospectors and traders. The discovery of gold in Denver in 1859 increased traffic but, with the decline of the gold rush and the disruption of the Civil War, travel slowed. In 1865, David Butterfield surveyed the route and opened it to a thriving freight and stage business. The life of the trail was short, its eastern terminus rolling up before the laying of track by the Kansas Pacific.

The stage line and later the railroad provided the stimulus for the early settlement of the area. Combined with fertile agricultural resources, the community of Wilson was established and looked to a promising future. The town was originally platted in 1871 and incorporated in 1883.

From the early settlement, the railroad that bisected the center of town was a dominant force that influenced the physical and commercial development of the town. Residences, churches, schools, as well as commercial buildings were constructed both north and south of the tracks. Business advertisements as early as the 1880s, included tag lines such as 'southside' and 'north of the tracks'. The railroad impacted the development of local industry as the first flour mill and

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grain elevators were built along the rail line in downtown Wilson before the turn of the century. Wilson's central business district today is illustrative of this early development and continues to serve as a mixed-use commercial area like most communities in rural Kansas.

In the 1883 *History of the State of Kansas*, William Cutler notes, "Wilson has had a good, healthy growth since it first started; people who came, came with the intention of making their settlement permanent. The town has superior advantages to many other towns in Central Kansas. It has an excellent agricultural country to support it, and located as it is in the northwest corner of the county, draws a great deal of trade from the southern part of Lincoln County and the eastern part of Russell County. It also has an additional advantage in the coal discoveries that have been made in its vicinity and which are being successfully operated. This advantage, in a country like Central Kansas, where fuel is so very scarce, cannot be over-estimated."²

The Early Settlement (1871-1876)

"As early as 1865, a stage station on the new Butterfield Overland Dispatch running from Atchison, Kansas to Denver, Colorado, was named Wilson Creek Station. This crude rest stop and relay point – a 'swing station' it was called, was located approximately one-half mile southeast of the present Wilson. The station was abandoned in 1868, the year that the Kansas Pacific Railway tracks reached the area and the first depot was built."³ The railroad's original survey, which followed the Republican River route, was changed to the Smoky Hill route and on to Denver.⁴ The name, Wilson Station, was derived from the township in which the depot was located, that being Wilson.⁵ "The settlement continued to be known as Wilson Station until June of 1871 when the Post Office Department designated the site Attica. That label lasted only six months – until November of the same year when the designation was changed to Bosland, from the Latin word 'bos,' meaning cattle or oxen."⁶

In September of 1871 the town of Wilson was located and surveyed by the National Land Company.⁷ "The first building erected in town after the site was surveyed was built by Phillip Gabel, on the west side of Michigan Avenue near the railroad track, in which he opened the pioneer store of Wilson. The first settlement around Wilson was made in the spring of 1871, about six months before the town of Wilson was located, and the first person to make permanent settlement on a piece of government land in the vicinity was J. T. McKittrick. A number of settlers arrived in 1871-72, primarily from Pennsylvania. A settlement had barely been established when steps were taken to erect the first school house in 1872. Blown down in a wind storm, work was not resumed until 1874 when a small stone school house was built in the southeast part of town."⁸ In June of 1873, the Postal Department designated the town Wilson.⁹

Francis Swehla arrived in 1874, one of the first Bohemians in the area. That year began a second wave of settlers - Bohemian immigrants from Iowa, Nebraska, Chicago and New York. These first Bohemians came mostly by train in 1874-75; a second set followed in 1876 by wagon from Minnesota. Swehla wrote letters in the Czech language newspapers encouraging other Bohemians to come to the area. "A curious fact about the Bohemians is that although most had been craftsmen in the old country, the majority, in the beginning, made farming – which they knew little about – their vocation here. Cheap, available land was the reason. However, many soon drifted back to their trades."¹⁰

The arrival of the first Bohemians in the area between 1874 and 1876 was a significant event in the development of Wilson. It was the Bohemians that influenced the cultural and social framework of the community establishing Wilson's rich Czech heritage that remains a distinguishing feature today.

The Boom Years (1887-1904)

According to Cutler's *History of the State of Kansas*, the years of 1877-78 were years of marked improvement in the town of Wilson in which a number of businesses and homes were erected. Cutler notes the construction of a large wooden building, called 'the barracks,' that was designed to accommodate the great numbers of immigrants, until they could erect homes or select claims for homesteading. "Like the first buildings in all new frontier towns, those in Wilson were rather inferior and most only one-story high. The first two-story frame building in town was erected by H.M. Keyser. He and his

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family arrived in Wilson in the spring of 1878; upon their arrival, Mr. Keyser purchased two lots and immediately built a good two-story frame building. The 'Wilson House' was one of the first two-story stone buildings, erected south of the tracks opposite the depot, by John Jellison in 1877.¹¹

The year of 1878 brought a profusion of construction activity in Wilson. By year's end the number of buildings in the community had doubled. Perhaps most significant was the construction of the depot, just north of the tracks, east of Michigan Avenue. In the fall of 1878, the Kansas Pacific Railway Company commenced erection of a magnificent stone depot, which opened in the spring of 1879.¹² The depot was constructed of sandstone quarried between Kanopolis and Brookville and shipped in by train. It was hailed as one of the finest depots on the entire line of road between Kansas City and Denver.¹³

The following year, 1879, was nearly a repeat of the construction of 1878; while the buildings that went up were not quite as numerous, they were of a better class. H. Greenough erected a steam flouring mill that began production in May of 1879, capable of grinding five hundred bushels of wheat per day. It was also in 1879 that Schermerhorn and Thompson put up a frame dry goods store building on Michigan Avenue and *The Wilson Echo*, the only paper published in Wilson at this time, was established by S.A. Coover.¹⁴

By the early 1880s, Wilson was commencing to look like a town with a first class depot, a school house, hotels, a mill, a printing office and several businesses.¹⁵ The first church was built that year – a small stone structure was erected by the Presbyterians at a cost of \$3,000. Other substantial improvements were made in 1880 - Nesmith and Walmer built a two-story stone building on Michigan Avenue, as did Barton & Carbiener; the former was a grocery store and the latter a hardware store.¹⁶ J.T. McKittrick, a land agent for the Union Pacific Railroad and the first area settler to the area, moved to town around 1880 and built the Cipra Hotel south of the tracks.¹⁷ In 1882, Anspaugh and Youngsman of Pennsylvania founded the community's first bank – the Bank of Wilson. They built the existing two-story stone building on the west side of Michigan Avenue.¹⁸

In Cutler's 1883 *History of the State of Kansas*, he summarizes, "Wilson is a progressive, prosperous town, and is inhabited by a thrifty, enterprising, and energetic people, who are not discouraged by difficulties, or rendered reckless by prosperity. For a town only twelve years old it has made wonderful progress, and gives evidence of what a few determined people can do."¹⁹

In 1882 Wilson boasted a population of 503, and the following year the town petitioned and was granted incorporation. W.H. Carhart, Fred Deissroth, Ed Schermerhorn, Michael Keyser, C.J. Claussen, Ira Danner, Mike Schwarz, C.F. Kyner, A.P. Woodmansee, James Latta, Joseph Latshaw, Dan Carbiener, A.D. Williams, A.A. McCoy, S.B. Jellison, H. Keller, S.A. Coover, and J.T. McKittrick were among the 58 petitioners. J.D. Lang was elected the town's first mayor.²⁰ Following its incorporation, the community grew modestly but steadily. Numerous existing two-story stone commercial buildings were constructed during this period. James Latta who owned and operated Latta Drug in a frame structure north of the depot, built a new stone store on Michigan Avenue that was designed to serve as a hall for the Odd Fellows on the second floor. In 1886 the Wilson State Bank was founded and the existing building built (the bank still serves the community today).²¹ Also in 1886, R.T. Levitt built his new stone building, designed to serve as City Hall and a community hall on the 2nd floor and house his department store on the ground floor. The Tampier and Zeman buildings were two-story stone structures built south of the tracks in 1887 and the Methodist Church was built one block west of Main Street in 1888.

By the mid-1880s, in addition to expanding commercial endeavors, numerous industries had developed in the community. There were at least seven banks of coal being mined, one of them owned by the Kansas Pacific Railway Company. The quality of the coal mined was rather inferior but sufficed as fuel. A booming industry was that of rock quarrying, which supplied the majority of local building material. The principal quarry was located north of town in the bluffs along the Saline River. Previously mentioned was the flour mill constructed in 1879. There were also three grain elevators in place,

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through which an enormous amount of grain passed each year. Two additional industries included two cigar factories owned and operated by Jan Florian and Vaclav Gregor and the creamery operated by H. Carhartt who supplied the local community with cheese and also shipped some to Denver.²²

As the turn-of the century approached, the construction of new commercial structures slowed somewhat but several prominent buildings were constructed in downtown Wilson during this time. In 1893 the new Schermerhorn & Lang building was constructed (replacing the frame structure built in 1879) and in 1899, the Hotel Power opened its doors just north of the Union Pacific Depot. The hotel was later damaged by fire, rebuilt and renamed the Midland Hotel. This facility provided Wilson with a first class hotel, touted to be one of the finest on the Union Pacific line between Kansas City and Denver. The block of commercial buildings along Front Street, south of the railroad tracks, took its current form during this period. Sibrava notes that "probably the Bohemians greatest contribution to the culture and social life of Wilson was the erection of Wilson Opera House in 1901."²³ The Opera House became the cultural and social center of community and continued to serve that function for years. Around this same time, another two-story stone building was constructed by Tampier, adjacent to the Opera House. And finally, in 1904 the Weber-Pierano Building was constructed at the corner of Michigan and Front Streets (the former location of the Wilson House). Nick Weber and Andy Peirano built this massive corner building to house a large business featuring hardware, implements, and automobiles, in addition to the Farmer's State Bank. Weber and Pierano had also recently built a grain elevator just south of the tracks on the west side of Michigan Avenue. The construction of the Weber-Pierano Building in 1904 brought to a close the twenty-eight year period that comprised the initial 'boom years' in downtown Wilson. It was during this period that the first permanent commercial structures were built of native limestone, most of which were two-story structures location on Michigan Avenue (Main Street) and along Front Street (Old Highway 40) south of the tracks.

Twentieth Century Wilson (1905-1953)

Around the turn-of-the century, downtown Wilson featured significant limestone commercial buildings but there were also numerous one and two-story wood frame commercial structures still in place on Michigan Avenue (Main Street). In 1910, the Presbyterians built a new brick church, replacing their original stone structure constructed in 1880. Located one block east of Michigan, on Kansas Avenue, this building appears to have been the first brick structure built in downtown Wilson. Businesses were thriving and the community continued to experience steady growth. The City developed a municipal water and light system in 1911 and the town boasted an efficient fire department and competent public officials. An article in the April 9, 1914 edition of *The Ellsworth Reporter* was titled 'Wilson – A Hustling, Thriving City of 1200 Inhabitants, the Center of a Great Agricultural Country....' The article provides a thorough overview of the community. It notes that, "Few districts are more favored, none more productive than that of which Wilson is the trade center... With a population of approximately 1200, and surrounded by a rich farming country, conditions in this city are normal and flourishing and sound judgment indeed was shown by the founders of the town in casting their lot here. It is easy of access, the town site was admirable chosen and located on the main line of Union Pacific, ample train service is afforded and the large markets are within easy reach. Years ago Wilson... passed the primitive, experimental stage and the privations and hardships of frontier days are all but forgotten in the face of the productive and progressive present."²⁴ Alfalfa, grain, especially the famous Turkey Red Hard wheat, vegetables, live stock and hay are the main products of the region and the shipments of lumber, coal, cement, lime, plaster, implements, automobiles, corn, brick, fruit, salt, and groceries are extensive. The Wilson Fair was recently organized and the article notes that you will travel many a mile before you find a better opera house... for a town of this size. The town boasted two banks with deposits amounting to \$430,000, a new ice plant and new hospital. Churches of the leading denominations, principal lodges, and an active Business Men's Club were in place and thriving.²⁵

As with most communities, World War I had little impact on the prosperity of the town. Although few commercial buildings were constructed between 1905 and the mid 1920s, a number of important developments occurred during this time. In 1915, a rear addition was added to the Midland Hotel which was operating at more than 100% occupancy on many occasions.²⁶ The Wilson Grade School was built in 1916 at the north end of Main Street, primarily to serve grades one through six for residents living north of the tracks.²⁷ In 1917, J. Tobias hired Henry Winter, the Manhattan (Kansas)

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architect who designed the new Grade School, to design a new commercial building on Michigan Avenue to house the post office.²⁸ Around 1920, F.D. Olds, who operated the golden Belt Garage (at the north end of Main Street where the post office is now located), purchased Berger Bros. Grocery and opened Olds Motor Company. The following year, he expanded the business and built the one-story addition to the north. The city's first public library – Lang Memorial Library was built, across from the Methodist Church, in downtown Wilson in 1923. These prominent 'institutional' buildings were all constructed of brick (or stone with brick facades) and effectively represented a transition from the early limestone structures to the "modern" brick buildings prevalent through the mid-twentieth century.

The mid-1920s brought about another flourish of construction activity in downtown Wilson. This period did not result in a physical expansion of downtown Wilson, but rather a second phase of more permanent construction. The majority of structures built during this time were one-story brick structures constructed to replace the wood frame structures built during the town's formative years (1880s). The one exception was Peppy Jo's barber shop, constructed beside the Midland Hotel in 1928, this two-story brick building was the last documented two-story structure built in downtown Wilson. In addition to the construction of new brick structures, some existing stone buildings were remodeled during this period and new brick storefronts installed.

1925 dealt a major blow to the community with the failure of the Farmer's State Bank (located in the Weber-Peirano Building at Michigan and Front Streets). Additionally as with all towns, the Great Depression, the dust-bowl, and World War II did hamper growth in the community. Only two existing downtown commercial buildings, one-story brick buildings, are documented to have been built during this time (1932). However, it appears that some established businesses expanded and continued to thrive. The Midland Hotel persevered; interviews with local women who worked in the hotel in the 1930s confirmed that business was booming - the primary customers being salesmen and businessmen from the train and surrounding area, as well as wealthy local residents.

The increasing popularity of the automobile probably had as great an impact on development during this time as any other factor. The completion of the Golden Belt Highway was perhaps the most significant occurrence in the city of Wilson in the 1930s. The newly paved highway followed section lines from Kansas City to Denver; it came into downtown Wilson on 24th Street, ran down Main Street and turned east, exiting town out Front Street. The highway directly impacted at least one local business, the Southside Garage. In 1931, Vleck's built the existing building, expanding their former business (garage) to include a car showroom, a gas station bay and a cafe, based in part on the fact that the new Golden Belt Highway ran by the store.²⁹ The early 1930s also saw the construction of the White Eagle Station at the corner of Highway 40 and Main, the addition of a one-story brick garage at the south end of the Weber-Pierano Building, by Roland Cobb for his Ford Agency and the construction of two additional buildings along Front Street, south of the tracks.³⁰ In 1934 the pavement of U.S. Highway 40 (Front Street) reached Wilson from the east – "pavement all the way to New York," was the local boast.³¹ The town experienced a boost with over-the-road transport complimenting the existing railroad industry. It was around this time that Greyhound bus service reached the area and the Southside Cafe became the local bus stop.³²

Challenging times did take its toll and resulted in the loss of at least one prominent local business. Following a fire in 1932, Schermerhorn's Department store opted not to rebuild and closed its doors after serving the community for more than fifty years.³³ Downtown Wilson did experience a significant physical improvement during this time with the paving of Main Street (Michigan Avenue) in 1937;³⁴ a huge street dance was held to celebrate the completion.³⁵ The City also remodeled City Hall installing a new brick facade and completed a municipal sewer system in 1938. Between 1942 and 1945, the City of Wilson acquired land just east of Main Street and developed a landscaped green space as the first City Park.³⁶

The end of World War II represented the emergence of a new generation in the business circles of Wilson. There are numerous examples of servicemen returning to Wilson after the war and joining their father's businesses. In several instances, it is that generation that is now retiring from local businesses. Wilson did experience resurgence after the war

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and saw the first construction of new downtown commercial buildings in over a decade. In 1946, Klema IGA expanded their business and built a new one-story brick grocery store on the corner of 26th and Main Street (moving from their former location north of the new building). Just four years later, Klema built an adjoining structure to the west to house a Laundromat. It was also in 1950 that the local telephone company expanded and built a new facility on 25th Street, east of Main. These later two buildings were one-story brick (and block) structures but they departed from the traditional commercial storefront design and were notably "modern" in design. One final (existing) brick building was constructed in downtown Wilson during the district's second period of significance from 1905-1953. The Valetor Cleaners building was built in 1953, also to replace a former frame structure occupied by the same business.

As with most communities, many buildings had been poorly maintained over the previous decade and the post-war period brought a period of 'modernization' to traditional commercial storefronts. It was during this period that many existing downtown buildings were 'updated' as a symbol of progress.

By the early 1950s, downtown Wilson had taken on its existing form. The run-down wood frame structures that existed as remnants of the 1880s had been steadily replaced, primarily by one-story brick structures over a period from the mid-1920s to the early 1950s. Many storefronts had been recently 'modernized' and the area was thriving. Prominent religious and civic structures established downtown Wilson as the social and cultural, as well as, commercial center of the community. There were concentrations of commercial activity along Main Street, north of the railroad, and along Front Street (Highway 40), south of the railroad with prominent businesses located in each of these clusters. The railroad right of way was a hub of industry in the center of downtown with three operating grain elevators, a gas station and the depot standing as a testament to the community's agricultural and transportation ties. Wilson continued to prosper from its rich agricultural assets and to serve the surrounding trade areas as a thriving commercial center.

Modern Day Wilson (1954 – Present)

The year of 1953 is not a significant date in the history of downtown Wilson. It does represent the date of construction of the most recent (existing) contributing structure in the district which coincides with the fifty year age threshold for significance. However, the city of Wilson continued to experience modest growth and sustained a viable business district through the late 1960s.

The town enjoyed temporary financial boosts from federal projects in the area in the 1960s. An Atlas Intercontinental Missile Base (soon abandoned) was constructed two miles east of town and Wilson Dam and Reservoir was built eleven miles north of town. Additionally, Interstate 70 was completed through the state of Kansas.³⁷

The City's new power plant and water tower were constructed one block west of Main Street in 1954. A new City Fire and Police facility was built one block west of Main, in 1963. Over the next twenty years, this facility was expanded and a new Senior Center constructed in the same area, creating a block comprised entirely of contemporary metal buildings to the west of the district. In downtown, the new post office was built at the north end of Main Street (on the site of the former Golden Belt Garage) in 1964.

The Union Pacific Railroad discontinued passenger service in 1972 marking the start of a period of decline in the community. The time coincided with last stages of a generation of local business owners. The retirement and passing of a number of prominent businessmen resulted in the closing of several key downtown businesses including Somer Hardware, Brown Drug, and Weber Hardware. These buildings were sold or leased but many of the new businesses were short-lived compared to the former anchors. Throughout this time, important local businesses including the two grocery stores, two car dealerships, and the local bank, remained as anchors in the community. The Wilson State Bank, which has continuously served the community since its establishment in 1886 illustrated its confidence in and commitment to the community with the construction of a new bank and modern drive-through facility in 1985. Although the new bank was an important symbol of a viable future, its construction resulted in the demolition of an entire block of buildings on Main Street.

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The face of downtown Wilson changed drastically in the 1980s as the community lost several of its significant historic resources. The Cipra hotel, suffering from neglect and lack of maintenance, was demolished in 1982 and the depot, perhaps the most prominent downtown structure, was demolished the following year. The challenges continued as the Midland Hotel closed its doors in 1988 and school consolidation resulted in the demolition of the high school (south of downtown) and the closing of the grade school in the late 1990s.

Amidst these challenging times, an effort emerged to restore the Opera House and establish a Czech Museum. The community has continuously celebrated its Czech heritage with an annual event – the Czech Festival and the community is known as the 'Czech Capital of Kansas.' The Opera House continues to be a focal point of the festivities during the festival. Ongoing preservation efforts have maintained a strong link to the community's Bohemian ancestry and ensure the building's future.

The old adage that you don't appreciate what you have until it is gone may be appropriate to describe current attitudes and the atmosphere in downtown Wilson. The Wilson Community Foundation was formed a few short years ago. Their first project was to purchase and restore the Midland Hotel to an operating hotel and restaurant. Restored to its former splendor, the hotel reopened this month and stands as an incredible testament of local commitment. The project has invigorated the community and generated increasing interest in preserving local historic resources and culture. The Foundation is now embarking on a project to rehabilitate the Grade School into an Assisted Living Center. A new antique mall recently reopened and the Southside Garage will soon again house an auto dealership. Things are looking up in downtown Wilson. This nomination is submitted as a result of these local initiatives to revitalize the community by respecting its past.

ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN WILSON

Wilson's central business district followed a typical pattern of development for many Kansas communities. Commercial buildings were constructed along two primary and perpendicular streets: Michigan Street (now Main Street) running north to south and Front Street (old Highway 40, now 27th Street) running east to west. Front Street "fronts" the railroad right-of-way on the south side of the railroad tracks and serves as the primary east/west route in the community. The railroad right-of way bisects the downtown areas, creating two concentrations of commercial development; a third grouping is the concentration of elevator structures on the railroad right-of-way. Wilson's central business district also features a number of prominent 'set-piece' buildings in addition to its traditional commercial structures.

The town of Wilson came into being during the late settlement period in Kansas. Wilson's location and configuration were influenced by the location of the Smoky Hill River, the stage route of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch (1865-1868), the rail line originally operated by the Kansas Pacific Railway (later Union Pacific), and the town planning concepts that were common during the 1860s and 1870s. The physical appearance of Wilson was further influenced by the materials available for building construction and the building styles that were popular for small town commercial buildings between the 1870s and mid 1900s.

With the exception of the individual 'set-piece' structures, the district is physically defined by its traditional downtown configuration and setting. Lots are typically in 25' increments and the commercial buildings maintain a common setback, flush with the public sidewalks. The buildings generally span the full width of the lot and share party walls with adjoining buildings. The district's commercial structures are representative of traditional commercial styles of the period(s). Except for corner properties, only the building fronts are designed for public view and access. Two story structures are typically characterized by a clear distinction between the upper and lower facades. The upper facades usually have regularly spaced windows and the top of the building is defined by a parapet or cornice. Storefronts are comprised of three basic components: a transom, large display windows and a bulkhead or base and framed by columns or piers. Based on the classifications in Richard Longstreth's book, *the Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, the majority of the commercial buildings in downtown Wilson fall into three distinct types: one or two-part corner block

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building types or the enframed window wall building type. Stylistic expression and ornamentation were typically secondary to the standard composition of traditional commercial buildings.

Prominent individual 'set-piece' structures compliment the commercial structures in downtown Wilson. These buildings tended to be somewhat more elaborate in their designs and more obvious in their stylistic references, although their function was still the predominant design factor. The prominent 'set-piece' buildings and traditional commercial structures generally shared stylistic influences.

Vernacular Architecture

According to Jim Kemp in his book *American Vernacular Regional Influences in Architecture and Design*, many buildings, particularly in small, rural communities are called 'vernacular' because they do not fit the progression of mainstream styles. As architectural styles changed and evolved, regional architecture was left – at least stylistically- further and further behind.³⁸ Stylistic Classifications are provided for each of the district's buildings however, many of the buildings embody stylistic influences of the classification identified rather than stand as exemplary representatives of the style. Many of the properties were difficult to classify and most could be termed vernacular. Kemp's vernacular theory explains the lack of design sophistication found in most small rural towns.

Kemp also notes that regional architecture has always been characterized by the use of local building materials.³⁹ Stone is a common building material in vernacular structures, particularly in the mid-west where trees were not abundant. This was clearly the case in Kansas where native limestone was the predominant building material by the 1880s. Ellsworth County is the eastern boundary of the Land of the Post Rock. The native limestone, abundant in central Kansas is commonly referred to as 'fence post', 'post-rock', or 'Greenhorn' limestone. The stone was first quarried for use as fence posts. By the 1870s and 1880s, most communities in the area had residents who were stone workers from the "old country" or "back east" providing local expertise on the potential of post rock as a building material. To obtain building block, fence posts, or other products, the quarrying process was the same: holes were drilled about four to five inches deep into the rock and nine to twelve inches apart along a line marked for splitting; feathers and wedges were placed in the holes, and tapping the wedges lightly with a stone hammer split out the slaps, posts, or blocks. In emerging towns, native rock was used exclusively as a building material and as a key resource in the area's economy; the use of post rock came to symbolize progress.⁴⁰

The town of Wilson was blessed with easy access to native stone. Limestone was available for the taking on the divide between the Smoky Hill and Hell Creek and on the bluffs south of the Smoky Hill River. From this natural resource came tons of stone for the building of numerous store buildings in Wilson and private homes and barns in and around town.⁴¹ The original buildings in Wilson were typically one-story wood-frame structures. Within just a few years of the first settlement, native limestone became the building material of choice and remained such through the turn-of-the-century. In 1910, the first documented brick structure was built in downtown Wilson, beginning the transition to brick as the dominant building material through the mid-twentieth century.

Late Victorian Styles

The Late Victorian architectural styles reflected a taste for ornamentation. Downtown commercial buildings in the Late Victorian styles typically featured bracketed cornices of pressed metal or wood with panels, complex moldings, and dentils. Upper facade windows typically included cast iron, stone, or wood ornamental lintels or hoods. Stile and rail wood doors were sometimes a single leaf but were often paired and included recessed panels and ornamental moldings. Storefronts included cast iron, ornamental stonework, and wood trim. Architectural ornamentation was mass produced and available by rail as a result of advances in technology. It was common for builders to purchase stock items at the local lumberyard or iron works. Builders could also order building products from catalogs that were shipped by rail.

The district has ten surviving buildings significantly influenced by Late Victorian design theory. Six are of the Italianate style – all of which are on Main Street (Buildings #6, 11, 16, 17, and 22) They are all two-story, limestone buildings

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constructed in the 1880s. They all have stone quoins and most originally had arch-topped second-story windows with hoods. They all originally had pressed metal or wooden cornices, however the cornices on Building #11 (south building) Himes Hardware and #17, the IOOF/Latta Drug building have been removed.

Two additional commercial structures are classified as Late Victorian that do not fall under the Italianate sub-category. The first is Somer Hardware (Building #9); Italianate influences were evident on the original storefront however, the cornice does not have the paired brackets representative of the Italianate influence. Additionally, the window hoods are shaped but not ornamental in design. The metal covering on the upper facade (historically used as a signboard) is also not characteristic of the Italianate style. This building does reflect Late Victorian tenets but is most representative of its historic function as a hardware store. The remaining commercial structure under the Late Victorian Classification is the Schermerhorn & Lang Building (Building #15), constructed in 1893. This building is a classic example of elaborate ornamentation with its decorative metal cornice, metal pilasters and pressed metal on the upper facade.

One of the most prominent Late Victorian structures in downtown Wilson is the Midland Hotel (Building #30). Constructed in 1899, the two story limestone structure reflects numerous stylistic influences including: Richardsonian Romanesque, characterized by the arched main entry; Second Empire reflected in the mansard roof; Queen Anne as evidenced by the arched tripartite windows with stained glass; and an Italianate storefront with cast-iron columns. All of these influences fall under the Late Victorian style.

Another Late Victorian building in the Wilson district is a church in the Romanesque style located at the southeast corner of 24th Street and Avenue D (Building #14). The First Presbyterian Church was constructed in 1910. It has a stone base, brick body and wood shingle siding in the gable ends and at the top (bell chamber) of the tower. The church has round arched topped windows and door openings; the bell tower also has round arched openings.

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

In Kansas, the revival styles of the late 19th and early 20th Century were commonly used for important buildings like churches and libraries.⁴² In Wilson's downtown there is both a Late Gothic Revival style church and a Late 19th and 20th Century Revival Style library. These Revival style buildings sit across the street from each other on Avenue F between 24th Street and 25th Street. Because they are only one block east of where 24th Street and 25th Street converge, the block between 24th Street and 25th Street is very short and their sites provide prominent views of all sides of each structure, creating a classic 'set-piece' setting. While revival styles were common in Kansas small towns, they were usually simple interpretations of the high style buildings of larger cities and in the more populated eastern states.

The United Methodist Church was constructed in 1888 and expanded in 1893. It is a simple interpretation of the Late Gothic Revival style in native stone (Building #2). This simple stone structure has pointed arch windows on the addition, crossbracing trim on the gable ends of the original structure and a bell tower with steeply pitched engaged dormers. In keeping with the Gothic Revival style, the stone wall material extends into the gable end without a break.

The Lang Memorial Library (Building #3) was constructed in 1923. It is a simple rectangular red brick building with a stone base, banding, and trim. The brick parapet conceals the flat roof. The front facade has a symmetrical design with three primary bays articulated by brick pilasters with stone caps. Palladian windows and an arched entry on the front of the building are far more ornamental and "classical" than the simple rectangular windows of the other facades. This building has a Beaux Arts character in its use of pilasters and symmetry. The Palladian windows and round-arched doorway contribute a hint of Italian Renaissance character. It was clearly the intent of the designer to evoke stature and prestige through the use of these elements of revival styles.

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements

Thirteen buildings in the Wilson district are classified as Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movement buildings. They are Buildings #1, 6-north building, 7-8, 18, 21 – the three buildings on Main Street, 25-26, and 29.

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Building #1, Wilson Grade School, was constructed in 1916 and is located at the terminus of the axis of Main Street immediately north of 24th Street, thus holding a prominent location in Wilson's downtown. The building is a rectangular shape, 2-1/2 stories tall, constructed of red brick with stone trim. The roof is hidden by a brick parapet. While this school is not an interpretation of any high style, the design of the building's stone detailing at the top of each pilaster is influenced by the Prairie style.

The remainder of the district's buildings that fall into the category of Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements are of the Commercial Style. During the late 19th century commercial buildings in the United States began to be designed with greater simplicity than the Late Victorian Styles that had preceded them. These commercial buildings had flat roofs, simple facades usually with symmetrical fenestration and traditional storefront designs. Simple brick patterns in the upper facades and at the parapets were common. The district buildings that are classified as Commercial Style were all constructed between the last decade of the 19th century through the mid-20th century. These buildings are both one and two stories tall and constructed of limestone and brick. A distinguishing feature of these structures is the overall lack of ornamentation. They are generally void of ornament with the exception of simple stone or brick detailing.

Modern Movement

Wilson has a few buildings influenced by the Moderne and International Style trends in design. These movements both simplified architectural expression, however, Moderne simplified to a lesser extent than the International Style. Moderne buildings were generally constructed between 1920 and 1940, the International Style began in 1925 and continues to the present. The buildings constructed after 1950 in Wilson tended to be simple and yet evoke the stylistic tastes of the Modern Movement. These buildings include #12, 20 and the west building of # 21. They are not concentrated in any one part of the downtown, but are scattered throughout. The buildings are further distinguished by their common variation from the traditional storefront design. This fact is probably a result primarily, of the original function of the buildings including the telephone company office, a cleaners, and a Laundromat. These buildings maintain brick (and block) as the dominant building material but do not incorporate a traditional storefront. The style is also characterized by the use of new, 'modern' materials such as glass block, found on all three of these buildings. A number of storefront alterations on commercial buildings within the district also fall into the Modern stylistic category. These alterations are classified as 'modern' primarily as a result of the materials used. They were modifications common among traditional commercial storefronts and are included in the district's period of significance.

Historic Alterations

The "modernization" of traditional commercial storefronts was viewed as a sign of progress throughout the twentieth century. Common alterations included the installation of aluminum framed display windows, structural glass or other cladding, the replacement of original wood bulkheads with concrete or brick, and the application of stucco to achieve a smooth, clean finish. Many businesses remodeled the interior of their stores and offices at the same time and lowered ceilings. This alteration often resulted in the covering of transoms on the building's exterior, typically with a business sign or cladding. At least two buildings in downtown Wilson (Buildings #8 and 25) that had new brick storefronts installed on original stone buildings, during this period – another common "modernization." Finally, there are two examples (Buildings #10 and 27) of modern slipcovers being installed on two-story buildings. This was a common alteration in the downtowns of larger communities throughout the country from the 1950s through 1970s. Although many of the 'modern' treatments were essentially claddings or coverings, the slip covers are more detrimental to the historic character of districts because they cover the entire facades of two story buildings, typically obscuring all original ornament and detailing and most significantly, removing the traditional distinction between the upper and lower facade. The storefront alterations generally retained the building's traditional components and often the configuration. Due to the common nature of the storefront modifications, they are considered acceptable and are included in the district's period of significance.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The historic structures that comprise the Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street reflect a continuum of commercial enterprises and institutional facilities, and the corresponding evolution of architecture in downtown Wilson from the late-nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries. These resources are significant as a surviving group of buildings and structures that represent the history of downtown Wilson. As a collection of extant buildings that retain their historic architectural integrity and associations with the community's development, they form a distinct district with a visible sense of time and place.

The significant resources in the district span the period of 1880 to 1953 including two defined periods of significance: 1880 to 1904 and 1905 to 1953. These periods are illustrated by two distinct styles of buildings. The first period is defined primarily by two-story commercial structures built of native limestone. Stylistically, these buildings primarily fall under the architectural classification of Late Victorian Italianate. There are also a few structures built during this period that are classified under Late 19th and 20th Century Revival styles and the Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements Commercial Style. The second period of significance is characterized primarily by the use of brick and the transition to one-story commercial buildings rather than the original two story stone buildings. Stylistically, the majority of these properties fall under the Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements Commercial Style; a few of the storefront alterations and buildings constructed in the later years were clearly influenced by the Modern Movement. As a grouping, these buildings reflect the continuum of architectural development in Wilson. Included in this collection are examples of common alterations made to traditional commercial buildings as part of the general evolution of commercial design.

Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street is significant as a group of buildings representative of commercial and institutional property types historically found in small, rural communities throughout Kansas and the Midwest. The buildings reflect the patterns of architectural and commercial development dominant in this region for the past hundred years. As with most small communities, Wilson's existing downtown buildings illustrate the community's history.

¹ Frank Sibrava, *History of Wilson*, p.3-4.

² William C. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*. Ellsworth County, Part 7. Wilson, 1883. (accessed on-line)

[Note: Cutler's *History of the State of Kansas* is a reprint of Andreas' *History of Kansas*; Andreas' version, Vol. II, p. 1280-82 was also consulted]

³ Sibrava, p.3.

⁴ *Wilson World*, July 8, 1948.

⁵ Cutler.

⁶ Sibrava, p.5.

⁷ Cutler.

⁸ Cutler.

⁹ Sibrava, p.6.

¹⁰ Sibrava, p.6-7.

¹¹ Cutler.

According to a July 15, 1948 article in *The Wilson World*, "The Wilson House, a two-story stone building which stood unfinished south of the tracks and opposite the depot (the first wood frame depot), was completed by John Jellison. Arthur A. Jellison recalls that his uncle, John Jellison traded the building for a farm in Iowa. Isaac Wilson Allerton was to take over the hotel and open it for business. When all of the Wilson's arrived, 12 or 13 covered wagons of families, they moved into the hotel. Isaac's son Millard Wilson recalled frequent visits of the railroad men who are, drank, and sometimes stayed overnight the 'hotel'. The engineers and brakemen came to know the hotel as the 'Wilson House' by the owner's name. Later the hotel was managed by Pop Claussen." The precise fate of the Wilson House is unknown. The building was replaced by the Weber-Pierano Building which was constructed in 1904 and is still standing today at the southeast corner of Old Highway 40 and Main Street.

¹² Cutler.

¹³ Sibrava, p.8.

¹⁴ Cutler.

¹⁵ Cutler.

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¹⁶ Cutler.

¹⁷ Sibrava, p.5.

The building was located on the southwest corner of Old Highway 40 and Main Street. According to an article in the May 6, 1982 *The Wilson World*, "In the early 1890's, McKittrick advertised the building in *The Wilson World* and claimed that 'the building would be suitable for a hotel and is one of the finest store rooms in the city.' M.H. Alderson, one of the first doctors in Wilson and Bill Slimm, a jeweler, were two of the first businesses to rent space in the McKittrick building. Lewis and Josephine Cipra bought the building in the early 1900s. It was known as both the Cipra Hotel and the Central Hotel. Jack Libal, a Wilson resident purchased the hotel in 1962 and changed the name to J and L recreation. After Libal sold the hotel in 1974, it changed owners several times and was used primarily as a tavern. The building was demolished in 1982.

¹⁸ *The Wilson Echo*, March 5, 1885.

¹⁹ Cutler.

²⁰ Sibrava, p.8.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *The Wilson World*, July 29, 1948.

²³ Sibrava, p.7.

²⁴ *The Ellsworth Reporter*, April 9, 1914.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Czech Opera House Museum (Wilson), Local Histories on the Midland Hotel (no date or author).

²⁷ *The Wilson World*, March 5, 1917.

²⁸ Patricia J. O'Brien, Lyda-Jean Apartments (Manhattan, Kansas) National Register Nomination-Appendix 1 Henry B. Winter: An Early 20th Century Kansas Architect,

²⁹ Interview with Joseph Vcek in Wilson, February, 2003.

³⁰ Interview with Leroy Klema in Wilson, February, 2003.

³¹ Sibrava, p.11.

³² Vcek Interview.

³³ Schermerhorn clipping file, Czech Opera House Museum in Wilson (newspaper article with no source or date).

³⁴ Minutes of City Council Meeting, April 6, 1937.

³⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Karl Gaston, Pictorial History of Ellsworth County, Kansas. (Ellsworth: The Ellsworth Reporter, 1992).

³⁶ General Warranty Deeds, City of Wilson.

³⁷ Sibrava, p.11.

³⁸ Jim Kemp, American Vernacular Regional Influences in Architecture and Interior Design. (Washington D.C.: The American Institute of Architects Press, 1987) p.10.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Grace Muilenburg and Ada Swineford, Land of the Post Rock. Its Origins, History, and People. (Lawrence/Manhattan/Wichita: The University Press of Kansas, 1975) p.3, 58-71.

⁴¹ Sibrava, p.8.

⁴² Kansas Preservation Plan, "The Period of Exploration and Settlement," 60 and "A Time of Contrasts: Progress, Prosperity, and the Great Depression," 22-23.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Ellsworth County, Kansas

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM References:

#	Zone	Easting	Northing
5	14	545808	4297700
6	14	545808	4297645
7	14	545762	4297645
8	14	545748	4297595
9	14	545777	4297586
10	14	545769	4297539
11	14	545629	4297649
12	14	545652	4297662
13	14	545525	4297699
14	14	545527	4297736
15	14	545686	4297749
16	14	545686	4297802

Note: UTM reference points are noted on the attached USGS Quad Map AND on the District Boundary Map.

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street is shown by the dotted line on the attached boundary/property map.

Boundary Justification:

Wilson's central business district will be divided into three historic districts: #1 – Main Street, #2 – Elevator, and #3 – South Side (Old Highway 40). The boundaries of the districts were established primarily by the physical barrier created by the one-block wide railroad right-of-way that bisects downtown, in addition to the distinction in uses (i.e. the elevator district) and adjacent contemporary construction. The Wilson Downtown Historic District #1 – Main Street is comprised of the concentration of commercial and institutional buildings located north of the railroad tracks in downtown Wilson. It includes those properties that represent the concentration of commercial and institutional resources that retain their historic architectural integrity.

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DOCUMENTATION

Photo and Figure references are provided by individual property under Section 7 – Narrative Description of each property. The location of photos is keyed to the attached district map.

FIGURES

Photocopies and scans of numerous historic images within the district are attached. The figures were assembled from a variety of sources and credited on each figure. A number of the images are from miscellaneous clipping files and displays at the Wilson Czech Opera House Museum, many with no date of source provided. The scanned images out of the book *Pictorial History of Ellsworth County, Kansas* were provided The Ellsworth County Independent. Abbreviations used in the references include: WE – The Wilson Echo, WW- The Wilson World, and ER – The Ellsworth Reporter. The quality of some figures is poor because they had to be photocopied on site at the source.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: Brenda R. Spencer

Negatives: Spencer retains original negatives

Date: 5 June, 2003

Photo #	Camera Direction	Description [building(s) and/or address]
1	N	Main Street from 25th Street, looking north Buildings # 6 (L), 1, 9-11 (R)
2	N	Wilson Grade School, Building #1
3	NW	United Methodist Church, Building #2
4	E	Lang Memorial Library, Building #3
5	NW	Czech Cottages, Building #4
6	SW	Post Office, Building #5
7	SW	Olds Motor Company, Building #6
8	E	Robinson Residence, City Hall & Somer Hardware (Buildings #7, 8, & 9)
9	NE	Nesmith Building, Mortuary, & Somer Hardware (Buildings #11, 10, & 9)
10	NE	Telephone Company Building (Building #12)
11	NW	City Park (Site #13), from 25 th & Avenue D (picnic shelters in background)
12	E	Flagpole/memorial and Public rest room building in City Park.
13	SE	First Presbyterian Church (Building #14)
14	SW	Shermerhorn & Lang, Bank of Wilson, IOOF, Old Post Office (Buildings #15-18)
15	W	Bank of Wilson and Latta Drug/IOOF (Buildings #16 and 17)
16	NW	Old Post Office, IOOF, Bank of Wilson... (Buildings #18, 17, 16 15, & 6)
17	NE	Water Tower/Jail (Structure #19)
18	W	Valetor Cleaners & North Building of Klema IGA (Buildings #20 and 21-north)
19	NW	Klema Grocery (Shaws) (Building #20)
20	SE	Wilson State Bank Building (Building #22)
21	NE	Cross, Sula, Novak & Horejsi Buildings (Buildings #26 – 23)
22	SE	Levitt Department Store Building (Building #27)
23	N	Wilson State Bank (Building #28)
24	NE	Peppy Jo's Barbershop & Midland Hotel (Buildings #29 & 30)
25	SE	Peppy Jo's Barbershop & Midland Hotel from rear (Buildings #29 & 30)
26	N	The Midland Hotel (Building #30)
27	S	Buildings along Old Highway 40, from 26 th Street Downtown Wilson Historic District #3 - Southside
28	SW	Elevator and White Eagle Gas Station on railroad right-of-way Downtown Wilson Historic District #2 - Elevator
29	N	Main Street, from 26 th Street

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#	Name	Address	Owner	Mailing Address
1	Wilson Grade School	420 24th Street	Wilson Czech Opera House Corp.	P.O. Box 442, Wilson, KS 67490
2	United Methodist Church	2404 Avenue F	Methodist Episcopal Church	P.O. Box 565, Wilson, KS 67490
3	Lang Memorial Library	2405 Avenue F	City of Wilson	P.O. Box J, Wilson, KS 67490
4	Czech Cottages	518-20 25th Street	Czech Cottages, LLC	715 South 5th Street, Salina, KS 67401
5	U.S. Post Office	2404 Main Street	Marcelene Proffitt Trust	4002 Jupiter Hills Drive, Hutchinson, KS 67502
6	Olds Motor Company	2418 Main Street	Ad Astra Homes, LLC	715 South 5th Street, Salina, KS 67401
7	Robinson Residence	2405 Main Street	Marian B. & Louanna Robinson	P.O. Box 218, Wilson, KS 67490
8	City Hall	2407 Main Street	City of Wilson	P.O. Box J, Wilson, KS 67490
9	Somer Hardware Building	2411 Main Street	Wilson Czech Opera House Corp.	P.O. Box 442, Wilson, KS 67490
10	Mortuary Building	2415 Main Street	Al's Bar & Grill, Inc.	P.O. Box 386, Wilson, KS 67490
11	Nesmith Buildings	2419 Main Street	Al's Bar & Grill, Inc.	P.O. Box 386, Wilson, KS 67490
12	Telephone Co. Building	408 25th Street	Grauer Building Partnership	2504 Avenue D, Wilson, KS 67490
13	City (Lions Club) Park	24th Street & Avenue D	City of Wilson	P.O. Box J, Wilson, KS 67490
14	First Presbyterian Church	319 24th Street	First Presbyterian Church	P.O. Box 313, Wilson, KS 67490
15	Schermerhorn & Lang Building	2504 Main Street	Jack & Sharon Holloway	615 27th Street, Wilson, KS 67490
16	Bank of Wilson Building	2508 Main Street	Gene Burns Insurance Agency	328 S. 11th Street, Salina, KS 67401
17	IOOF/Latta Drug Building	2512-14 Main Street	Harry & Amy Swart	P.O. Box 191, Wilson, KS 67490
18	Post Office (Tobias Building)	2520-28 Main Street	Robert & Joan Malir	P.O. Box L, Wilson, KS 67490
19	Tobias Water Tower/Old Jail	behind 2528 Main St.	Robert & Joan Malir	P.O. Box L, Wilson, KS 67490
20	Valetor Cleaners Building	2530 Main Street	Gene Burns Insurance Agency	328 S. 11th Street, Salina, KS 67401
21	Klema IGA Building	2526-46 Main Street	Koetter Brothers, Inc.	P.O. Box 158, Wilson, KS 67490
22	Wilson State Bank Building	2505 (2503-1/2) Main St.	Roger Peterson/John Kasper	221 N. Douglas, Ellsworth, KS 67439
23	Horejsi Building	2509 Main Street	Dr. Kepka Family Practice Center, Ltd.	2308 Avenue D, Wilson, KS 67490
24	Novak Building	2515 Main Street	Shiroky Revocable Trust	P.O. Box 400, Wilson, KS 67490
25	Sula Meat Market Building	2519 Main Street	Wilson Telephone Co., Inc.	P.O. Box 190, Wilson, KS 67490
26	A.F. Cross Building	2523 Main Street	Dr. Kepka Family Practice Center, Ltd.	P.O. Box 126, Wilson, KS 67490
27	Levitt Dept. Store Building	417 25th Street	Shaw Living Trust	P.O. Box 460, Wilson, KS 67490
28	Wilson State Bank	422 26th Street	Wilson State Bank	P.O. Box 129, Wilson, KS 67490
29	Vocosek Barber Shop	418 26th Street	Jean Kingston/Edward Krysl	P.O. Box 271, Wilson, KS 67490
30	Midland Hotel	414 26th Street	Midland Hotel, LLC	P.O. Box 442, Wilson, KS 67490

Wilson Downtown
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UTM References:

- 1-14 545742 4297802
- 2-14 545742 4297745
- 3-14 545842 4297742
- 4-14 545842 429770
- 5-14 545808 429770
- 6-14 545808 4297645
- 7-14 545762 4297645
- 8-14 545748 4297595
- 9-14 545777 4297580
- 10-14 545769 4297539
- 11-14 545629 4297649
- 12-14 545652 4297642
- 13-14 545525 4297649
- 14-14 545527 4297730
- 15-14 545648 4297749
- 16-14 545648 4297802

